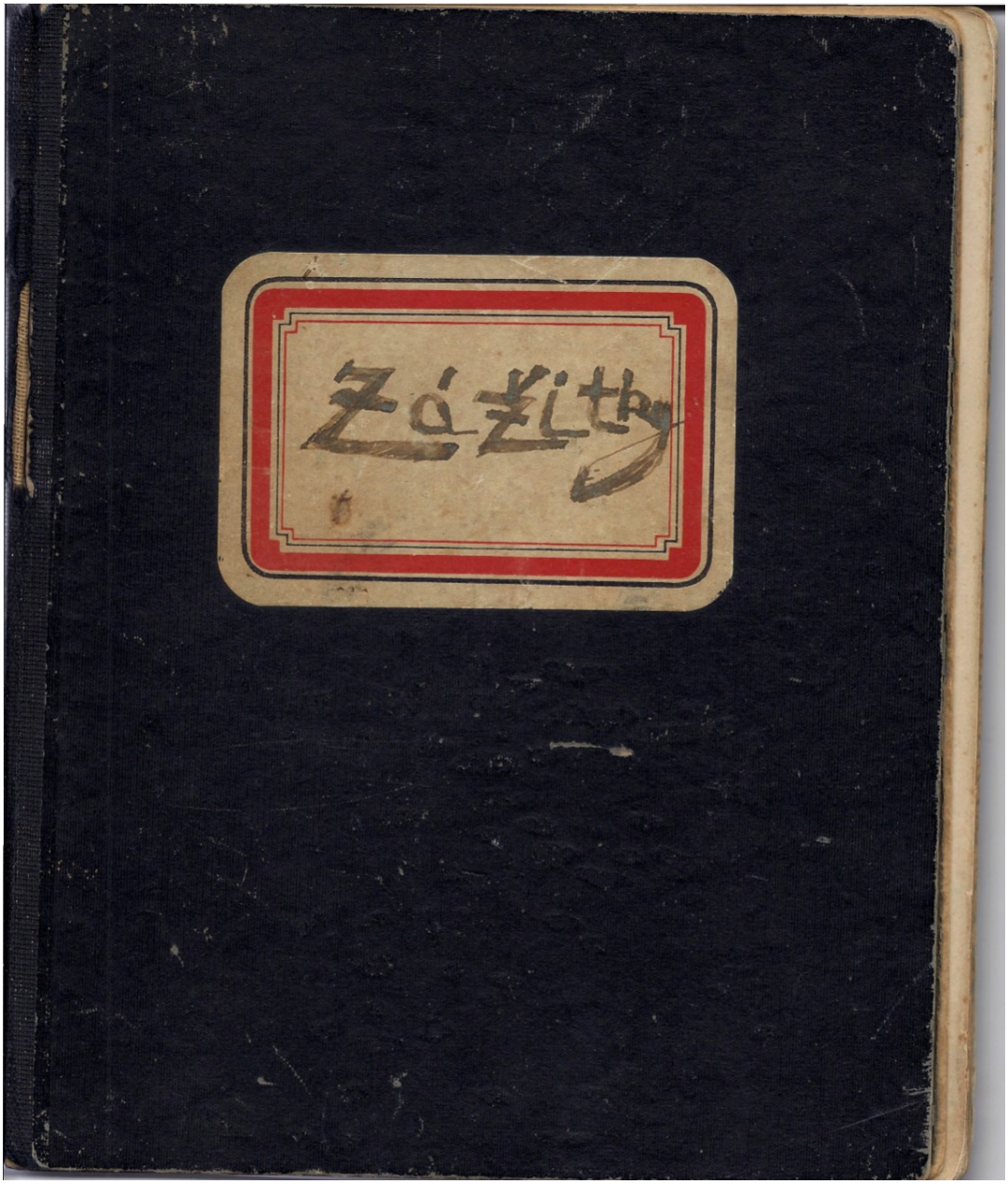
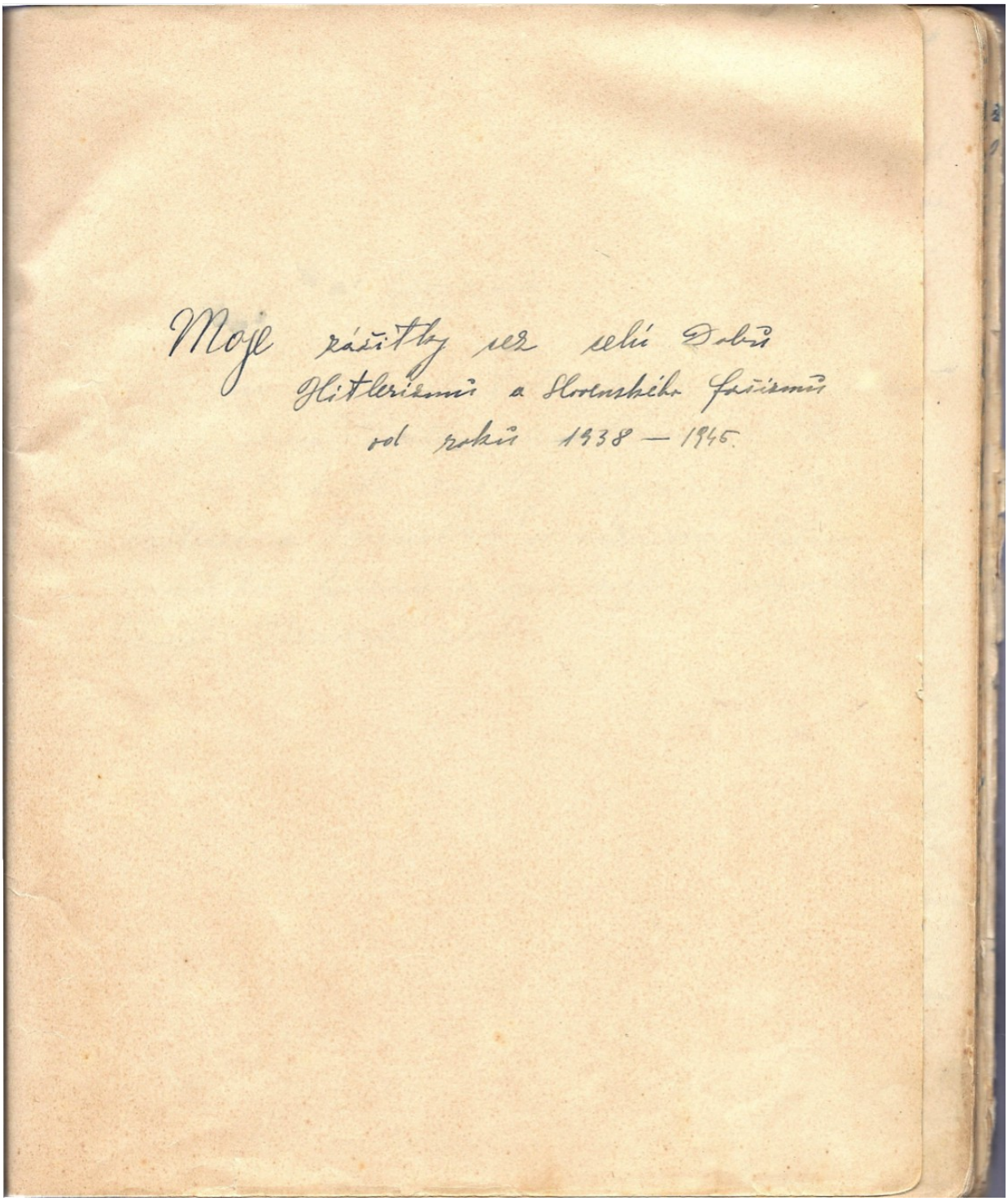
MISHKO

A Life in the Shadows of War

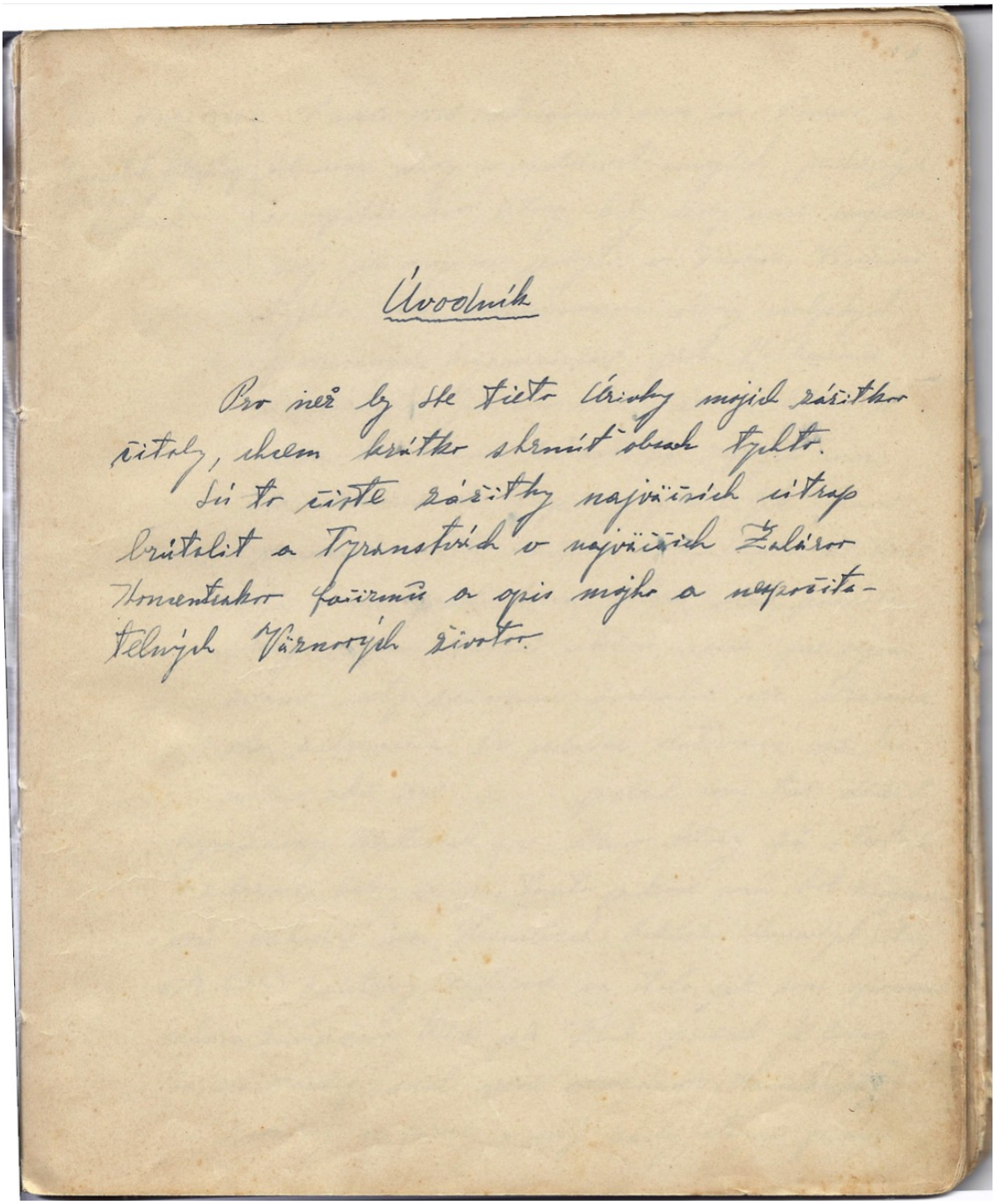
The Testimony of Maximilian Moshe (Mishko) Löffler

Slovakia · Austria · 1938–1945





My Experiences During the Era of Hitlerism and Slovak Fascism, 1938–1945



Before you read these lines describing my experiences, I would like to briefly summarize their contents.

They are the true experiences of the greatest suffering, cruelties, and tyrannies endured in the largest prisons of Hitlerite fascism, together with an account of my life and the lives of many fellow prisoners.

Dedicated to my late loved mother

Eva Löffler /Blitz

and my loved father

Maximilian Moshe (Mishko) Löffler

This is my testimony – Everything I have written is true!

Prepared by: Yaffa Leffler (Drojanski) & Dan Tovia Leffler (Löffler)

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Foreword by the Family

For most of our childhood, our father did not speak of the war. He was a hotelier, then a businessman, a husband and a father in a young country — and the years between 1938 and 1945 lived behind a door he kept closed. We knew only fragments: a number of camps whose names we could barely pronounce, a watch he never explained, a silence at certain times of year. When we asked, the answer was always the same gentle deflection. That generation tried to shield the people they loved from what they had seen.

It was only when his health began to fail, in the late 1960s, that our father decided to write. He filled a small black notebook with his upright Slovak hand, beginning with a sentence that tells you everything about the cost of the task: the wounds of the past, he wrote, were still fresh and the memories very vivid, and so it was very difficult for him to write at all. He did not finish. The manuscript breaks off in 1944, in a beer hall in Nitra, at the moment he loses consciousness under the blows of two men. He died on the 29th of May 1970, at the age of fifty-nine.

My father’s memoirs plus many documents lay for safekeeping with Dr. Ludovit Löffler, my father’s brother, for decades. When he passed away it was handed to my brother, Juri Avigdor Löffler and years later it was handed to me. In the 1990s I asked mum, Eva, — herself a survivor of Auschwitz — to translate it into Hebrew. This was the first time my mum got to know about these memoirs and documents. She wept "Why didn’t he tell me about it?" she kept asking. She had been his wife for more than twenty years and had never known most of it. In 2014 the manuscript was translated professionally into English, and the original notebook was entrusted to Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, so that it would be safe forever. That same year the Austrian Holocaust Victims’ Information and Support Center in Vienna invited our family to stand inside the very prison where our father had been held in 1938.

This book grew out of that long act of remembrance. It is built entirely on our father’s own testimony. We have not invented events, and we have not invented words; where he set down a conversation, the conversation is his. What we have added is the world around him — the history of the places he names, the regimes that hunted him, the camps through which he passed — so that a reader who was not there can understand what he was living through, and why each small decision was a matter of life and death.

These additions appear in clearly marked panels and in the maps and appendices, set apart from his story so that his voice is never crowded out.

One part of the book is different from the rest, and we want to be honest about it. Our father’s pen stops in 1944. What followed — the transport, the camps, the death march, the liberation — we have reconstructed from family records and from the documented history of those places. We tell it plainly, as what is known, and we do not put imagined feelings into his mouth. The truth of those months is terrible enough without embellishment.

The original handwritten manuscript — in Slovak, in a notebook

labelled "Zážitky" (Recollections) — is preserved in the archives of Yad Vashem, Jerusalem.

English translation of the original manuscript by Jana Garnsworthy, 2014.

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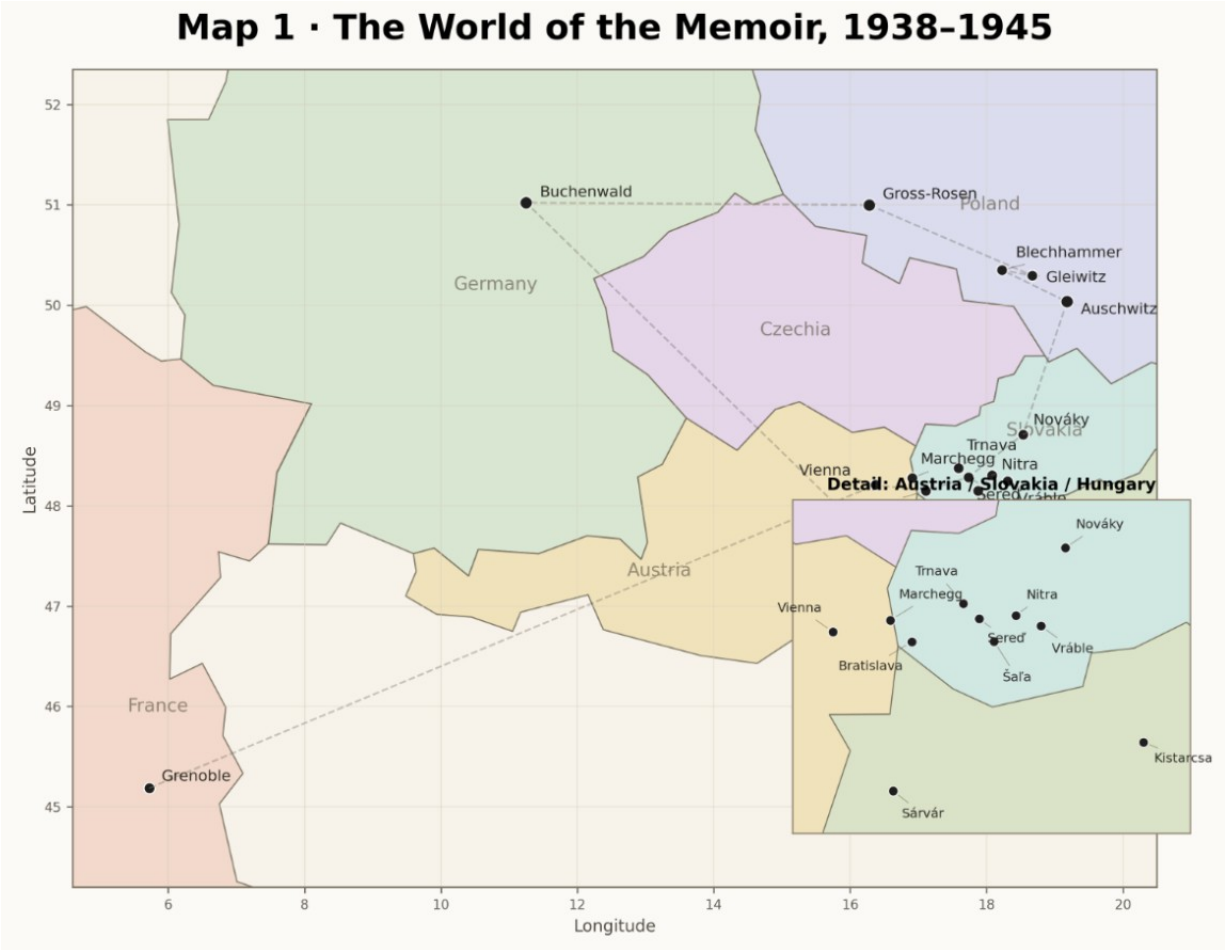
The Geography of the Story

Mishko Löffler’s war was fought across a small and shifting map. He was born in Nitra, in the rolling country of western Slovakia; he studied hotel management in Grenoble, in the French Alps; he carried documents and people across the border between Austria and Slovakia, a border that the rise of Hitler was about to redraw entirely. The towns he names — Marchegg, Trnava, Sereď, Veľké Uherce, Sliač — lie within a day’s travel of one another, and yet between 1938 and 1945 the lines on the map around them were torn up four times: the Austria he knew vanished into the German Reich; Czechoslovakia was dismembered; a clerical-fascist Slovak state was carved out; and finally the German army occupied even that. The last leg of his journey ran north and west, into the camp system of occupied Poland and Germany, and then — after the war — south to a new country on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean.

The maps in this book are schematic. They are drawn to show the true relative positions of the places he names and the routes he travelled, so that the reader can follow him; they are not survey maps and are not to scale.

The first shows the whole world of the memoir at a glance.



Map 1 · The world of the memoir, 1938–1945

A Timeline of the Years 1938–1949

March 1938 — Germany annexes Austria (the Anschluss). Mass arrests of opponents and Jews in Vienna.

1938 — Mishko, a student in Grenoble, works for the Vienna underground cell K.S. Viedeň. Arrested at the Marchegg border; held nine weeks in the Rossauer Lände police prison, Vienna.

Sept–Oct 1938 — The Munich Agreement; the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia begins.

14 March 1939 — The Slovak State was proclaimed under Jozef Tiso — a German client state.

1939 — Mishko's brother Karol and cousins escape toward Palestine on one of the last ships out of Europe.

1940–41 — Slovak anti-Jewish laws (the "Jewish Code") strip Jews of rights, property and livelihood.

1942 — Mass deportations of Slovak Jews to German-occupied Poland. Mishko survives with a forged baptism certificate and a theatre work permit.

1943–44 — Underground work at the Slovak National Theatre, Bratislava; forging documents; rescuing his brother's family in Hungary.

Aug–Oct 1944 — The Slovak National Uprising; Germany occupies Slovakia. House-to-house round-ups of Jews resume.

Late 1944 — Mishko is seized in Nitra, tortured at the Národný Dom, and deported. The manuscript ends here.

Late 1944–early 1945 — Camps: Gleiwitz, Blechhammer, Gross-Rosen, Buchenwald. A death march in January 1945.

Feb 1945 — Liberated from Buchenwald; returns to Nitra.

1945–48 — The family hotel is briefly reclaimed, then lost to Communist nationalisation.

6 June 1949 — Mishko, his wife Eva, and their son Júri arrive in Haifa aboard the ship Galilah.

A fuller timeline, with the wider events of the war set beside the events of his life, appears among the appendices at the end of this book.

The House on the Hill

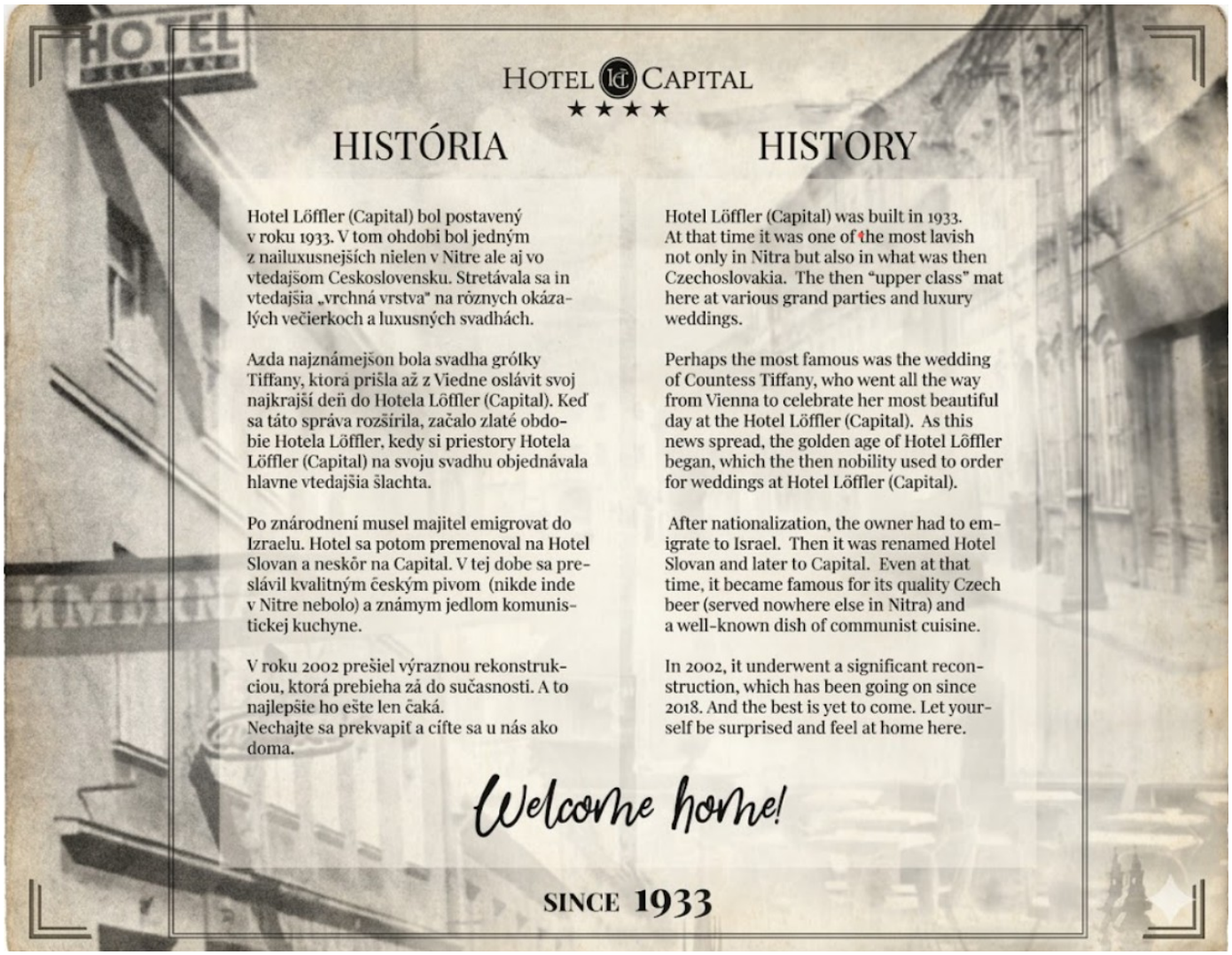
PART ONE

Nitra · The Löffler Hotel · Grenoble

Chapter One · A Family in Nitra

Maximilian Löffler — Mishko - Was born into a Jewish family in Nitra, in the western country of what was then Czechoslovakia. His father was Friedrich, whom the Slovaks called Bedřich; his mother was Anna, born Körner. The family owned the hotel Löffler in the town, the kind of establishment that was the centre of a provincial Central European life: a dining room with white cloths, travelling salesmen and local notables, a kitchen that never quite closed, a family that lived above its work. Mishko had brothers — Karol (Kartchi), the younger, and an older brother, Dr. Ľudovít Löffler (Lajos) — and a wide net of cousins and aunts scattered across Slovakia, Austria and Hungary. It was an ordinary, prosperous, deeply rooted life, and its roots were precisely what would later prove so dangerous: people with property and standing do not easily believe they will have to run.

Nitra was an old town, one of the oldest in Slovakia, set beneath a castle on a hill where the river bends. Its Jewish community was centuries old and, by the 1930s, thoroughly woven into the town’s commerce and professions. To be a Löffler in Nitra was to be known — to be greeted in the street, to have one’s hotel recommended, to belong. That belonging is the quiet foundation of everything that follows. When the persecution came, Mishko did not stay out of naïveté. He stayed because his parents were there, because the hotel was there, because Nitra was home, and because home is the hardest thing in the world to abandon while there is still, you tell yourself, a little time.


HOTEL
HOTEL CAPITAL
★★★★
HISTÓRIA
Hotel Löffler (Capital) bol postavený v roku 1933. V tom ohdobi bol jedným z nailuxusnejších nielen v Nitre ale aj vo vtedajšom Ceskoslovensku. Stretávala sa in vtedajšia „vrchná vrstva" na rôznych okázalých večierkoch a luxusných svadhách.
Azda najznámejšon bola svadha grófky Tiffany, ktorá prišla až z Viedne oslávit svoj najkrajší deň do Hotela Löffler (Capital). Keď sa táto správa rozšírila, začalo zlaté obdobie Hotela Löffler, kedy si priestory Hotela Löffler (Capital) na svoju svadhu objednávala hlavne vtedajšia šlachta.
Po znárodnení musel majitel emigrovat do Izraelu. Hotel sa potom premenoval na Hotel Slovan a neskôr na Capital. V tej dobe sa preslávil kvalitným českým pivom (nikde inde v Nitre nebolo) a známym jedlom komunistickej kuchyne.
V roku 2002 prešiel výraznou rekonstrukciou, ktorá prebieha zá do sučasnosti. A to najlepšte ho ešte len čaká.
Nechajte sa prekvapiť a cíte sa u nás ako doma.
HISTORY
Hotel Löffler (Capital) was built in 1933. At that time it was one of the most lavish not only in Nitra but also in what was then Czechoslovakia. The then "upper class" mat here at various grand parties and luxury weddings.
Perhaps the most famous was the wedding of Countess Tiffany, who went all the way from Vienna to celebrate her most beautiful day at the Hotel Löffler (Capital). As this news spread, the golden age of Hotel Löffler began, which the then nobility used to order for weddings at Hotel Löffler (Capital).
After nationalization, the owner had to emigrate to Israel. Then it was renamed Hotel Slovan and later to Capital. Even at that time, it became famous for its quality Czech beer (served nowhere else in Nitra) and a well-known dish of communist cuisine.
In 2002, it underwent a significant reconstruction, which has been going on since 2018. And the best is yet to come. Let yourself be surprised and feel at home here.
Welcome home!
SINCE 1933

Löffler Family Member Wedding in the hotel

THE JEWS OF SLOVAKIA

On the eve of the Second World War some 90,000 Jews lived in Slovakia, in communities that in some towns reached back many centuries. They were merchants and doctors, lawyers, craftsmen, hoteliers and farmers — a population integrated into Slovak economic life even where social prejudice persisted.

Nitra was among the most important centres of Jewish religious learning in the region, home to a renowned Nitra Yeshiva (Chief Rabbi Shmuel Dovid Ungar). Every Friday evening, nearly 300 students were welcomed for Kabbalat Shabbat, where they shared a festive meal and each received a small financial allowance to support them through the coming week.

A family like the Löfflers — established, propertied, locally respected — embodied the confidence of that world: the belief that ordinary decency and long residence were a kind of protection. Within five years that belief would be destroyed, and the great majority of Slovak Jewry would be murdered.

Today, 2026, it is Hotel Capital

Chapter Two · Grenoble, and the First Shadow

When he came of age, Mishko was sent abroad to learn his trade. He enrolled at the Hôtel Lesdiguières in Grenoble, in the French Alps, to study hotel management — the practical apprenticeship of a young man who would one day run the family hotel in Nitra. It should have been the making of a comfortable life. France in the late 1930s was another world from the one gathering behind him: a republic, uneasy but free, where a Jewish student from Slovakia could walk the streets without fear.

In his free time he travelled to visit relatives and fellow students in Vienna, who were generous and welcoming to him. But Vienna in 1938 was not the imperial city of memory. Many of the young people he knew there belonged to underground organisations fighting Hitler and fascism, and through them Mishko came to understand, sooner than most, exactly what was coming. "When I saw the terrible catastrophe approaching," he wrote, "I took part in any way I could to save my family and anyone else in danger." That sentence is the hinge of his whole life. A young man training to fold napkins and balance ledgers chose, instead, to become a smuggler of human beings.

Mishko's photos together with his fellow students at the Lesdiguières Hotel - School Of Hotelier de Grenoble

HOTEL LESDIGUIERES

District Vienna IV

Aunt Hilda · The K.S. Viedeň · The Underground

Chapter Three · The Cell in the Fourth District

The way into the resistance, for Mishko, was through family. One of his relatives, Hilda Novák, born Körner — and so connected to his mother's line — was the head of an underground group known as the K.S. Viedeň, based in the fourth district of Vienna. She entrusted the young hotel student with a task that was as dangerous as anything she could have given him: he was put in charge of organising illegal border crossings for comrades and refugees, of forging documents, and of carrying materials abroad to assist the fighters who had already escaped.

It is worth pausing on what this meant. Mishko was not a hardened conspirator. He was a student in his twenties, well dressed, well spoken, carrying a hotel-school manner that, as it turned out, made him a superb courier — he could sit in a railway carriage with forbidden documents on his lap, smoking a cigarette and reading a newspaper, looking for all the world like a young gentleman returning from his studies. The underground used exactly this. They sent him across borders again and again, his suitcase packed with typewritten booklets and organisational papers, trusting his nerve to carry him through the checkpoints. For a time, it did.

Family and comrades, Central Europe, late 1930s

VIENNA AND THE ANSCHLUSS, MARCH 1938

On 12 March 1938 German troops crossed into Austria, and within days the country was absorbed into the German Reich — the Anschluss, greeted by cheering crowds in Vienna's squares. For the city's 180,000 Jews and for opponents of Nazism, the change was instant and violent. Jews were beaten in the streets and forced to scrub pavements; thousands were arrested; the machinery of the Gestapo arrived overnight.

It was into this Vienna that Mishko travelled as a courier, and against this Vienna that the K.S. Viedeň and groups like it set themselves. The "demonstrations between Schuschnigg's followers and Hitler's supporters" that Mishko would soon witness from the floor of a Red Cross car were the death-throes of independent Austria. Kurt Schuschnigg, the last chancellor of the Austrian republic, had tried to hold a referendum to keep the country free; the Anschluss swept him and his guard away. Many of his protectors were arrested the moment the Germans took control — as Mishko would discover when he met one of them in a prison cell.

Young men of the resistance years

Marchegg

The Arrest · Vienna · Cell No. 26

Chapter Four · The Customs Post at Marchegg

In 1938, on one of these train journeys, Mishko was carrying important organisational documents for members who were already abroad. He had done it many times. This time, under what he himself called "rather peculiar circumstances," it went wrong — and the peculiarity is part of why he survived to write about it.

When the train reached the customs control at Marchegg, on the Austrian–Slovak border, the bundle of documents — a typewritten underground booklet he called, with bitter dryness, his "manuscripts" and "brochures" — lay neatly on top of his belongings in his open suitcase. A first customs officer came, asked in German where his luggage was, picked up that very bundle, asked whether there was anything else, thanked him, and left. For a moment Mishko was safe. Then a second officer arrived, a financial inspector, asking about foreign currency. The first officer called over that the luggage had already been checked and was in order. But the financial man insisted. He picked up the book of documents, leafed through it, and said: "Some interesting things in here. Where did you get it? Where were you taking this?"

Mishko told him it was a bundle of pharmaceutical manuscripts that a lady had asked him to collect. He was taken off the train, made to wait, then stripped and searched; the officer even cut his coat to pieces looking for more. Nothing further was found, but it was enough. He was detained — and then came the strangest order of all. The officer told him to buy himself a return ticket to Vienna, because, he said, it was cheaper that way. Mishko was being arrested, and was made to pay his own fare to the city where it would happen.

Chapter Five · Superintendent Wagner

In Vienna he was handed from the customs man to the city police, and from them, eventually, to a secret policeman who escorted him to a chief-superintendent named Wagner. On Wagner’s desk lay the confiscated documents. The man paced, agitated, then bombarded Mishko with a hundred questions — who he was, what he was doing. Mishko said he was the son of a hotel owner. Wagner sneered: "Am I supposed to believe that? The one thing you haven’t told me is that you are a communist." At last he said, "I don’t believe a word you say, and I am arresting you in the name of the law."

There was one small human moment that gave Mishko courage. Behind the chief’s back, the secret policeman who had brought him in stood silently tapping a finger to his own forehead — the universal gesture for a man who is not quite right in the head. It was enough. Mishko found the nerve to ask to telephone his family, or at least a lawyer. "Where do you think you are," Wagner snapped, "in a hotel?" But he allowed one thing: before the cell, Mishko was permitted to speak to a cousin — a young woman, the sister of the cousin whose mission he had been running — who was already behind bars. She was brought in, weeping. He comforted her, and told her urgently to find an aunt, who was to reach his father and beg him to go to the Czechoslovak Embassy and find a certain consul, a good friend, who might help. She did exactly as he asked. His father, Friedrich, was in Vienna the next day.

Chapter Six · Cell No. 26

The prison was the Rossauer Lände police barracks, one of the largest in Austria. On arrival they took everything — documents, watch, jewellery — cut the buttons from his coat and shirt, pulled the laces from his shoes and the belt from his trousers, and put him in Cell No. 26 on the first floor. The cell was about two metres by two: an iron bunk that folded against the wall, a thin straw mattress, a small bolted table, and a bucket for a toilet. It reeked of carbolic disinfectant, and the floor was slick with something oily. A warden let down the bed and said, almost courteously, "Lie down, you must be very tired." Within an hour Mishko woke with a splitting headache from the cold draught and the stench, and could not sleep again.

Then the door opened and a second prisoner was pushed in — a man in a black suit. Mishko assumed at first that he was an informer planted to draw him out. He was wrong, and what followed was one of the strangest hours of his life. The newcomer told him the news he could not have known: "Hitler’s people are here." The man was a member of Schuschnigg’s personal guard, arrested with the others when the Germans seized the Town Hall. They talked. And then the cell door opened again, and four or five men with swastika armbands and cigars clamped in their teeth came in. One held a paper and shouted: "Löffler!" Mishko jumped up — "Hier!" At the same instant his cellmate stood and answered "Hier!" too. For the man in the black suit was also named Löffler, from Floridsdorf, one of Schuschnigg’s guardsmen. Five or six times the name was called, and twice it was answered, until an officer stepped up to Mishko: "Don’t you understand, or are you deaf? We said Löffler!" Two strangers, sharing a name and a cell on the night Austria died.

Through the long night the cell filled. By dawn there were twenty-one men in it; by the following evening, twenty-eight, packed so tightly that they could no longer lie down and had to sleep standing, leaning on one another and on the walls. There was a chief judge among them, a factory director, a solicitor — important men, all of them now reduced to the same two square metres of terror. At ten o’clock one night an SS guard opened the food hatch and shouted a single word that emptied the blood from every face: "Startorium — concentration camp deportation!" Down the corridor they heard the other cells being emptied, names called one by one, and then a woman’s scream, and a man’s, and the siren of a Red Cross car; the old

warden told them, sorrowfully, that some of the prisoners had simply gone mad from fear.

One of the men in Cell 26, a businessman, suddenly sprinted forward and smashed his own head into the concrete wall, knocking himself senseless. The others tore a strip from a shirt, wet it with their tiny ration of drinking water, and worked to revive him. It was at this moment that the kindly old warden was replaced by a young, brutal Hlinka Guard. Seeing the water in the jug reddened with the injured man’s blood, the new guard sneered, "Where is your water?" They explained. "Drink that," he said. "You should have let him die." With that, Mishko wrote, The last trace of humane treatment was gone.

THE ROSSAUER LÄNDE — “DIE LIESL”

The police prison on the Rossauer Lände, on a bend of the Danube Canal in Vienna, was known to Viennese for generations by the affectionate nickname "die Liesl." After the Anschluss it became a place of mass detention: opponents of the new regime, Jews, and the remnants of the old Austrian state passed through its cells, many on their way to the first transports to Dachau and other camps.

Mishko was held here for nine weeks in 1938. In 2014, the Austrian Holocaust Victims’ Information and Support Center in Vienna invited the Löffler family to visit the building — a recognition, decades later, that what happened inside it had been remembered and recorded by one of the young men it had tried to break.

The prison was the Rossauer Lände police barracks

Chapter Seven · The Third Pillar, and the Road Home

At six o’clock one morning the door opened and the name was called: "Löffler!" His fellow prisoners, certain it was the end, clasped his hand and whispered "God be with you." Six armed SS men closed around him and marched him down the iron-floored corridors — their boots cleated with iron, the clanging unbearable — across a courtyard to a great gate that groaned open on its gears. Outside, a blinding light was thrown into his eyes. When it dimmed, he saw three concrete pillars standing in the yard. "The third pillar," the leader said. Mishko walked to it, his whole body shaking, sweat soaking through his shirt. A man held out a clipboard and a pencil: "Sign it!" "I will not sign it," Mishko said — and fainted. He came under a dash of cold water and was told to go to the third door on the left.

There he was interrogated by uniformed men with swastika armbands and a civilian at a typewriter, and asked, by his own count, well over a hundred questions. Then he was sent back to his cell — where his comrades, certain they had seen a ghost, helped him drink a little water. And then the door opened again. And again. In all, the cycle was repeated twelve times: twelve interrogations, sometimes with a blood-soaked handkerchief tied warm over his eyes and a march to a different office, all designed to break him. The twelfth time, at last, there was a judge present, and a clerk, and the atmosphere was almost civil. They read his answers back, asked if they were correct, and told him he would soon be allowed to go home. One even joked that they might come and let him entertain them at the hotel one day.

The night before his release, his cellmates pressed scraps of newspaper into his hands — names and addresses of their families — begging him to tell their loved ones they were still alive. He hid the tiny notes inside his shoes. In the morning, before the door opened for the last time, he carved his monogram into the wood of the cell with a fingernail: a small mark to say that he had been there. "You see," said the warden, almost smiling, "I’ve opened the door for you one more time." His comrades wept and said, "Don’t forget us." He never did. "I will always remember Cell No. 26 as long as I live," he wrote.

At the gate, in a crowd of hundreds of waiting relatives, stood his father. The watch they returned to him was not his own chrome one but a gold Schaffhausen — a strange small grace amid the cruelty. His father took one

look at his nine-week beard and said, "Go to the barber. You look like Christopher Columbus." The old barber near the prison, who had shaved many such men, lamented the new regime as he worked; his own son, he confided, had fallen victim to "those awful murderers." With the help of the consul his father knew, a new passport was issued — Mishko’s papers had vanished into the prison — and at last they boarded a train. Only when it crossed back into Slovak territory did he feel safe. At home in Nitra his mother, Anna, who had hardly slept the whole time, wept with joy. He was alive. He was free. He was, for the moment, home.

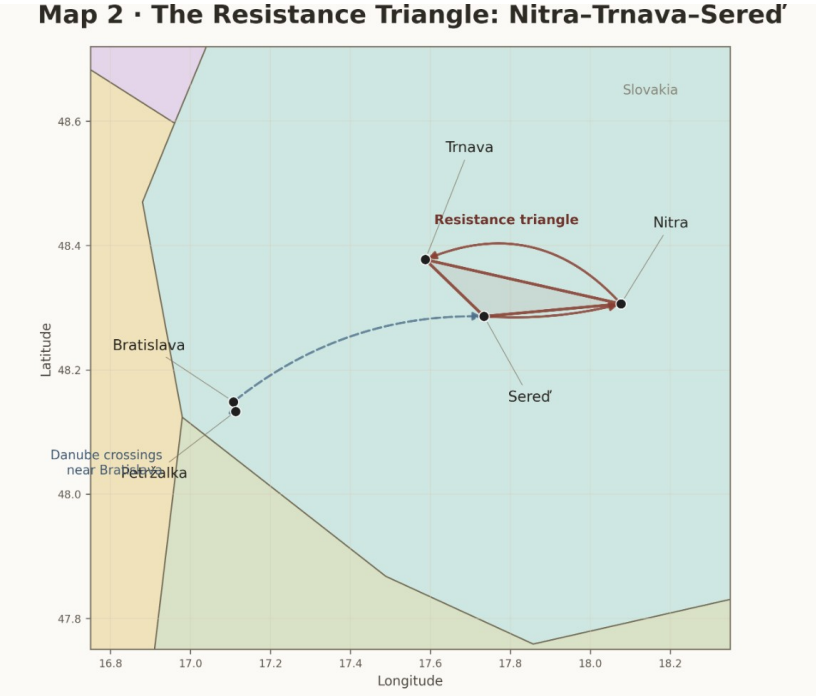
Theatre of Shadows

PART FOUR - *Resistance · Forged Papers · Rescue*

Chapter Eight · The Borders Close

Freedom did not mean rest. In the days after his return the house filled with visitors, and Mishko had to tell the story of the cells over and over. But he knew — more clearly than the relatives crowding his mother’s rooms — that hard days were coming, and that he had only a limited time to act. First he discharged a debt of honour: he sought out the families of his prison comrades, whose addresses he had carried home in his shoes, and told them quietly that their fathers and brothers were, for now, alive.

Then the work resumed. A messenger came from Petržalka, near Bratislava, with a letter from a comrade in Vienna: men in imminent danger needed to be moved. That same night Mishko organised a secret crossing of the Danube and brought the group to Nitra; then, with forged papers, he passed them across the Slovak–Hungarian border and on toward Poland, where anti-Nazi volunteers were joining the French Foreign Legion. He did this several times, shuttling the threatened out along these routes, until mobilisation for war shut the door.



Map 2 · The resistance triangle. Nitra, Trnava and Sereď — and the Danube crossings near Bratislava and Petržalka — formed the ground of Mishko's underground work.

In late 1938 the Slovak authorities, under pressure from Germany, began to mobilise. Mishko was called up as a reservist in the Slovak Air Force and served as an aircraft electrical technician — a skill that would later help to save his life. He was flown by military transport to an airfield at Veľká Luka, near Sliač. Almost as soon as he arrived, another aircraft landed with terrible news: the leadership had decided that Slovakia would not fight the German invaders. "We were devastated," he wrote — and he, who knew what German rule meant for Jews and for his comrades, more than most.

Mobilisation: the Slovak Air Force years

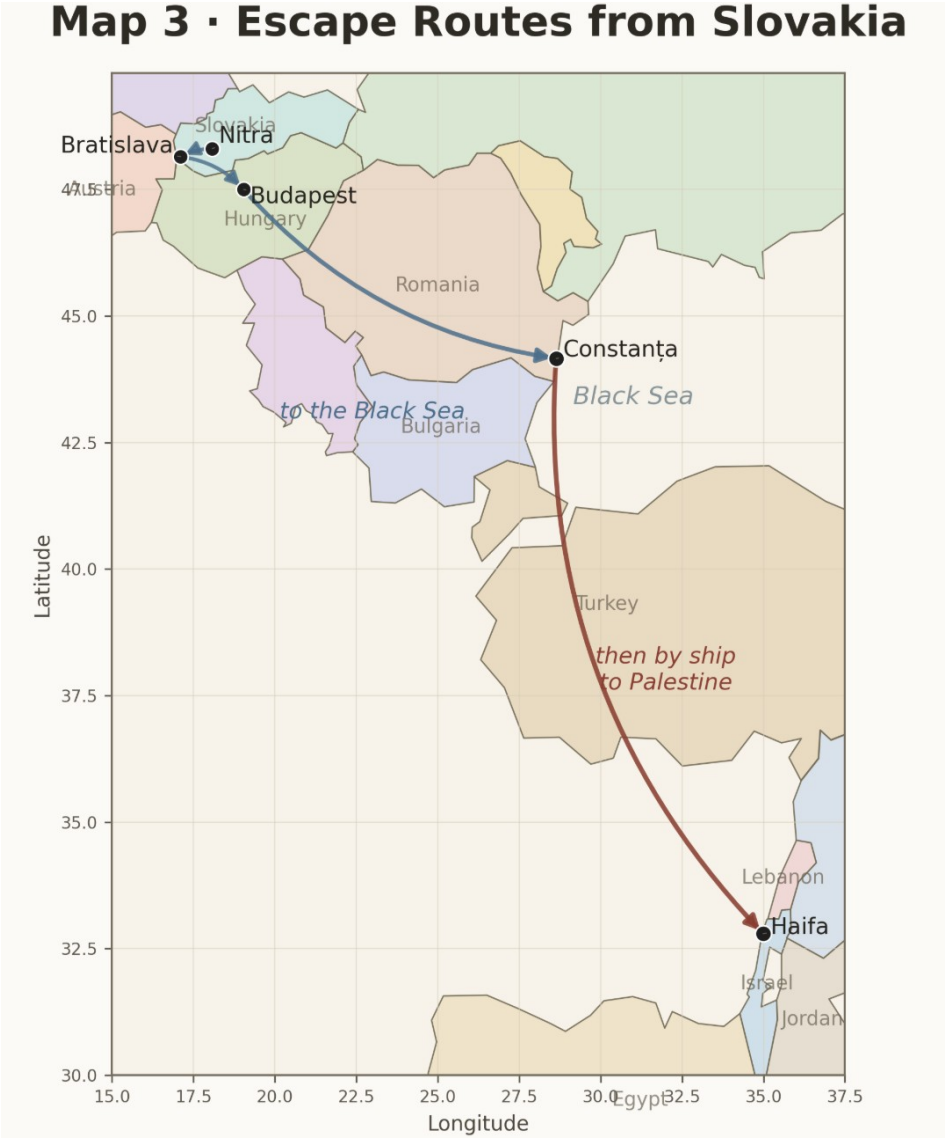
THE DISMEMBERMENT OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA, 1938–39

At Munich in September 1938, Britain and France ceded the Czechoslovak borderlands — the Sudetenland — to Germany, hoping to buy peace. They bought only time. In March 1939 Germany occupied the Czech lands as the "Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia," and on 14 March 1939 Slovakia was proclaimed an independent state under the Catholic priest-politician Jozef Tiso.

Independence was a fiction. The Slovak State existed at Germany's pleasure and modelled its politics on Berlin's. For Slovakia's Jews, the new flag meant only that their persecution would now be carried out by their own neighbours, in their own language, under their own government.

Chapter Nine · The Slovak State

The new regime moved quickly against its Jews, its laws closely mirroring Germany’s. Many young men fled while flight was still possible, and Mishko helped with nearly every transport he could reach, until the Hlinka Guard finally sealed the escape route. His own brother Karol, with two cousins — Laci and Arthur, one a doctor, the other a pianist — resolved to leave for Palestine. They were following relatives who had already made it: his cousin Hilda Novák, the underground leader, with her brother Karl Novák and another cousin, Mila Weiss, had reached Haifa aboard the illegal immigrant ship Af-Al-Pi-Chen. In 1939 Karol and the cousins made their way through Hungary toward the Black Sea, and caught one of the very last ships out of Europe, which carried them to British-Mandate Palestine.



Map 3 · Escape routes from Slovakia — south through Hungary to the Black Sea, and on by ship to Palestine.

For those who stayed, the noose tightened by the week. One Friday, not long after Karol had gone, Hlinka guardsmen came to the Löffler house on the pretext of "looking for Persian carpets" — a thin cover for plunder. When the family could not satisfy them, they dragged Mishko and his father to the local guard station and beat them, then, finding nothing to steal, let them go. It was a small foretaste. Within two or three weeks the news was of whole families deported to concentration camps.

JOZEF TISO AND THE HLINKA GUARD

Jozef Tiso, a Roman Catholic priest, became president of the wartime Slovak State and lent it a veneer of clerical respectability while it allied itself to Nazi Germany

and persecuted its own citizens. After the war he was tried and executed.

The Hlinka Guard (Hlinkova garda) was the party militia of the regime — uniformed, armed, and used for intimidation, plunder, and the round-up and guarding of Jews. Again and again in Mishko's testimony it is the Hlinka Guard, not the Germans, who come to the door: neighbours and local men who chose to serve. The Slovak State was notable, and notorious, for the eagerness with which it deported its Jews — and even paid Germany to take them.

Chapter Ten · The Forged Christian

By 1942 the deportations of Slovak Jews were in full flood. The authorities summoned Jews to "interviews," and a rumour spread that a family with even one member converted to Christianity might be spared. The Löfflers' turn came three days after the round-ups began. In those three days Mishko obtained a forged baptism — a "Christening" certificate — for himself. When he presented it, the commission placed him on the list of converts. It was an audacious gamble: the officer in charge knew his father personally and surely suspected the paper was false. He processed it anyway. That day most of Mishko's extended family, across all of Slovakia, was deported — including the parents of the cousins who had escaped to Palestine. The forged certificate kept his own parents at home.

Then came the bureaucracy of murder. Converts, the government now declared, must have their baptism certificates officially validated; in Mishko's case, because his forged paper named a Hungarian parish, the validation had to be obtained in Hungary, at the registry office at Alsógyőröd. The local registrar in Nitra had devised this precisely to make recognition impossible. Mishko went, and bribed the clerk — heavily — and for a time it was quiet. A fortnight later the rule changed again: converts must prove they had been baptised before 1938, before the Nazi era, or the conversion did not count. Once more he bribed the same clerk to alter the record. After this he was granted a special permit exempting him from wearing the yellow Star of David that every other Jew was now forced to display.

> **THE "JEWISH CODE" AND THE 1942 DEPORTATIONS**
>
> In September 1941 the Slovak State enacted the so-called Jewish Code, among the harshest anti-Jewish legislation in Europe, stripping Jews of property, profession and civil rights and compelling them to wear the yellow star.
>
> In 1942 the regime deported roughly two-thirds of Slovakia's Jews — on the order of 58,000 people — to German-occupied Poland, to Auschwitz and to the Lublin district. The Slovak government paid Germany a fee for each deportee. A web of exemptions — for converts, for "economically important" Jews with work permits, for certain professionals — became the only ground on which a Jew could legally remain. Every one of Mishko's forged papers and bribes was a move within that lethal system.

Chapter Eleven · The National Theatre

The cruellest of the regime’s instruments was the work permit. Every Jew who wished to remain legally employed had to obtain one from Department XVI of the Ministry of the Interior — a permit that cost the enormous sum of 6,700 Slovak korunas and guaranteed nothing. Without it, the Hlinka Guard marked you "unemployed" and shipped you to a labour camp; there were three in Slovakia, at Sereď, Nováky and Vyhne. To get a permit you needed an employer willing to risk vouching for a Jew, and not many were.

Mishko was fortunate in a way that reads almost like a novel. The Nitra hotel had often hosted a member of the Slovak government, and through that connection he was introduced to the man who became his saviour: F. Devinský, the director of the Slovak National Theatre in Bratislava. Devinský had known him before the war — Mishko had done electrical work in the theatre — and he arranged a job there as an electro-technician and personally secured a work permit in his name. The post protected his parents as his dependents, and when the rules changed so that a permit covered only the holder, Devinský secured a second permit for his father too, Löffler Bedrich, on the cover of a butcher who "hired" him on paper. The theatre also became a cover for resistance.

Nearly every night, in the office of a sympathetic man named Rindstel, or with the ballet master Relský, Mishko and a few trusted colleagues secretly listened to the BBC and other foreign broadcasts, picking up coded messages they passed to comrades at the front and drinking in the news that kept them from despair. One day, in passing, hearing that the Red Army had broken through near Kiev, he said something like: "If they manage to beat the Nazis there, we will settle the score with the fascist gangsters here." Someone reported the remark. He would hear his own sentence read back to him, much later, by his torturers.

He had insisted on a proper theatre identity card, with his photograph, naming him an electro-technician — and it proved its worth. One day a Hlinka guardsman he knew from Nitra confronted him: "What are you doing here, Löffler? This is no place for people like you." He was dragged before the guard commander, Gombár, a high-ranking man with authority even over the police, who demanded the same. Mishko calmly produced his permit and his card. The commander nearly fell over in surprise, shook his

head, and walked away without a word. The director assured him that, as long as he held that card, they could do nothing to him.

“ECONOMICALLY IMPORTANT JEWS”

As the 1942 deportations stripped Slovakia of Jewish labour and expertise, the regime issued exemptions to Jews deemed economically essential, and to a range of professionals and converts. In practice the system was a machine for extortion and a lottery of survival: a permit was ruinously expensive, conferred no real safety, and could be revoked at will.

For Mishko, the theatre permit was both shield and disguise — it kept his family at home and gave him a reason to be in Bratislava, near the radios and the routes. The protection was always provisional. When German occupation came in 1944, the permits and the exemptions counted for nothing at all.

Löffler Bedrich was born in Austria

Anna Korner was born in Austria

FORGED SALVATION

Across occupied Europe, forged documents were among the most powerful weapons available to Jews and to the resistance. A convincing baptism certificate, identity card or work permit could be the difference between life and the transport. The work demanded skill, nerve and an intimate knowledge of how the bureaucracy thought.

Mishko’s testimony is, among other things, a record of this paper war: the fake Christening, the bribed clerk at Alsógyőröd, the theatre permits, the thirty certificates forged in a night. Each was a small act of defiance against a system that murdered by category — and each turned the regime’s own obsession with documents back against it.

Chapter Twelve · Thirty Certificates in a Night

Word came by a farmer’s messenger that Mishko’s older brother, Dr. Ľudovít Löffler, and his wife Magda had been arrested in Hungary — Ľudovít held at a camp in Sárvár, Magda at Kistarcsa, both holding-pens for Jews bound for the death camps in occupied Poland. The farmer carried a desperate request: Mishko must somehow produce documents proving that Ľudovít, Magda, and a list of others — including the farmer’s own wife and two sons — were of "Aryan" origin, and that the farmer’s boys had been baptised before 1938. The boys had been ordered to undress; the guards, finding them circumcised, had declared them Jewish. Everything had to be done, and back in the brother’s hands, within forty-eight hours, or all of them would be deported to almost certain death. In all, it meant fabricating about thirty baptismal certificates and thirty birth certificates — whole non-Jewish identities for an entire group of people.

Mishko threw himself at the impossible. With his mother’s help and that of his skilled and trusted friend Andor Brody, he worked through the night and the next day without stopping — altering dates, choosing plausible churches and registries, typing and stamping by lamplight. Astonishingly, they finished in time. The farmer smuggled the packet back across the border just under the deadline, and the forged papers worked: instead of being sent east, his brother, sister-in-law and the others were released. A pile of falsified documents, made in a single night, had bought a dozen lives.

This was not the first time Mishko had risked himself for Ľudovít. Earlier, when his brother was destitute, the family had scraped together 38,000 Hungarian pengő, and Mishko had tried to smuggle the cash across the border as he had so often smuggled people. That time he was caught near Trnava, the money hidden on his body. The guards, mercifully, did not search him thoroughly and simply jailed him in the town. There he found that one of the wardens was secretly with the underground, and slipped him a note for Devinský. By sheer providence the National Theatre company was touring in Trnava at that very moment. Devinský intervened, declaring Mishko his indispensable electro-technician, and won his release. Time and again it was an ordinary identity card, a sympathetic warden, a director’s nerve — the thin paper machinery of survival — that stood between Mishko and the transports.

The Gestapo Comes

PART FIVE

Nitra · 1944

Chapter Thirteen · The Trench in the Garden

Only a few days after the news that his brother had got out, the war in Slovakia caught up with the family. By late 1944 Germany had occupied the country in response to the Slovak National Uprising, and Gestapo units, together with the Hlinka Guard, were hunting down the remaining Jews and resistance members without mercy.

One early morning a neighbour, Mrs. Šillerová, came banging on the door to wake them: Gestapo agents and guardsmen were going from house to house in the district, looking for Jews — especially the young. It was the day after the local Slovak garrison, under Commander Ján Šmigovský, had refused to let the Germans into the barracks; now the Nazis were taking their revenge by rounding up Jews door to door. Mishko's friend Andor Brody was staying with them. The two sprang up, grabbed a small case, and then heard men below asking the janitor where Brody and Löffler lived. They bolted out the back into Mrs. Šillerová's garden, where deep trenches — old air-raid shelters — lay overgrown with bushes. The Gestapo saw them run and fired; the two men threw themselves into a trench thick with vegetation and did not move. The guardsmen, assuming they had slipped through the fence to the street, ran off that way. Mishko and Andor lay in the trench until dusk, then crept to a hiding place Andor knew, and waited out the night. After dark his father found them: the patrols had gone, for now.

> **THE SLOVAK NATIONAL UPRISING, 1944**
>
> In late August 1944, Slovak army units and partisans rose against the Tiso regime and its German masters in the Slovak National Uprising, one of the largest anti-Nazi revolts in occupied Europe. Germany responded by occupying Slovakia outright and crushing the rising over the following weeks.
>
> For the Jews who had survived until then — protected by exemptions, permits and luck — the German occupation was catastrophic. The deportations, which had

> paused, resumed under direct German control, and the SS and Hlinka Guard hunted the remnant house by house. It is into these final round-ups that Mishko and his parents were swept.

Chapter Fourteen · The Národný Dom

After three or four quiet days the raids resumed; now the guards were "looking for people for a transport," and the rumour was that this one was bound for Sereď. There was said to be a temporary exemption — a family with a younger member holding a valid work permit might be spared. They clung to it. That very day a letter arrived from Ľudovít in Hungary: he and Magda were safe, thanks to the forged papers. For a moment there was relief. And in that same hour the Hlinka guardsmen came to the door and ordered them out.

They took the small backpacks they had long kept ready, each packing the tools of his trade — the father his butcher’s knives, Mishko his electrical tools — and between them they carried the mother’s bag. The guardsmen marched them, with other captured Jews, to the beer hall of the Národný Dom, the National House in Nitra, which had been turned into a detention and interrogation centre. The hall was already crowded, many of them well-to-do families of the town. The young were loaded onto a lorry and driven off to forced labour; when they were brought back, the interrogations began.

Mishko was the third called. In the little office sat two men he knew at once for murderers: Gombárčik of the Hlinka Guard, and Fritz of the Gestapo. Fritz, behind the desk, said he would ask questions that must be answered truthfully — "If you lie, you will pay for it" — and read out his list: Why had he converted in 1938? Why did he court only Christian girls? Where was his Christian girlfriend, and how much money had he given her? How was he connected to the partisans and the underground, and how much had he given them? Who were his collaborators? Then Fritz said, "I will repeat from the beginning."

As Mishko opened his mouth to answer the first question, Gombárčik, standing close, struck him twice, hard, behind each ear. "That’s not true!" For the second question he was not allowed even to begin. Fritz rose, fixed a bayonet to his rifle, and the two set on him together — Fritz driving the rifle-butt and bayonet from behind, Gombárčik punching from the front. They bent him over a chair and clubbed him across the back until he nearly passed out, then hauled him upright. Then they sat down to drink. Only then did Mishko feel something warm running down both legs, and look down, and see his own blood pooling on the floor. The room began to spin

and darken. He was dragged out into the main hall of the Národný Dom — and there the manuscript ends. He lost consciousness, and his pen, mercifully, lost the rest. ***My father passed away 29 May 1970 but his legacy and testimony will remain as a lesson, for future generations.***

. . .

Here Maximilian Löffler's handwritten testimony breaks off, in late 1944.

Mishko - Our love ABA passed away - 29 May 1970

He was never able to write the rest. What follows is reconstructed from our family records and documented history.

Through the Camps

PART SIX

Auschwitz · Gleiwitz · Blechhammer · Gross-Rosen · Buchenwald

Chapter Fifteen · What Is Known

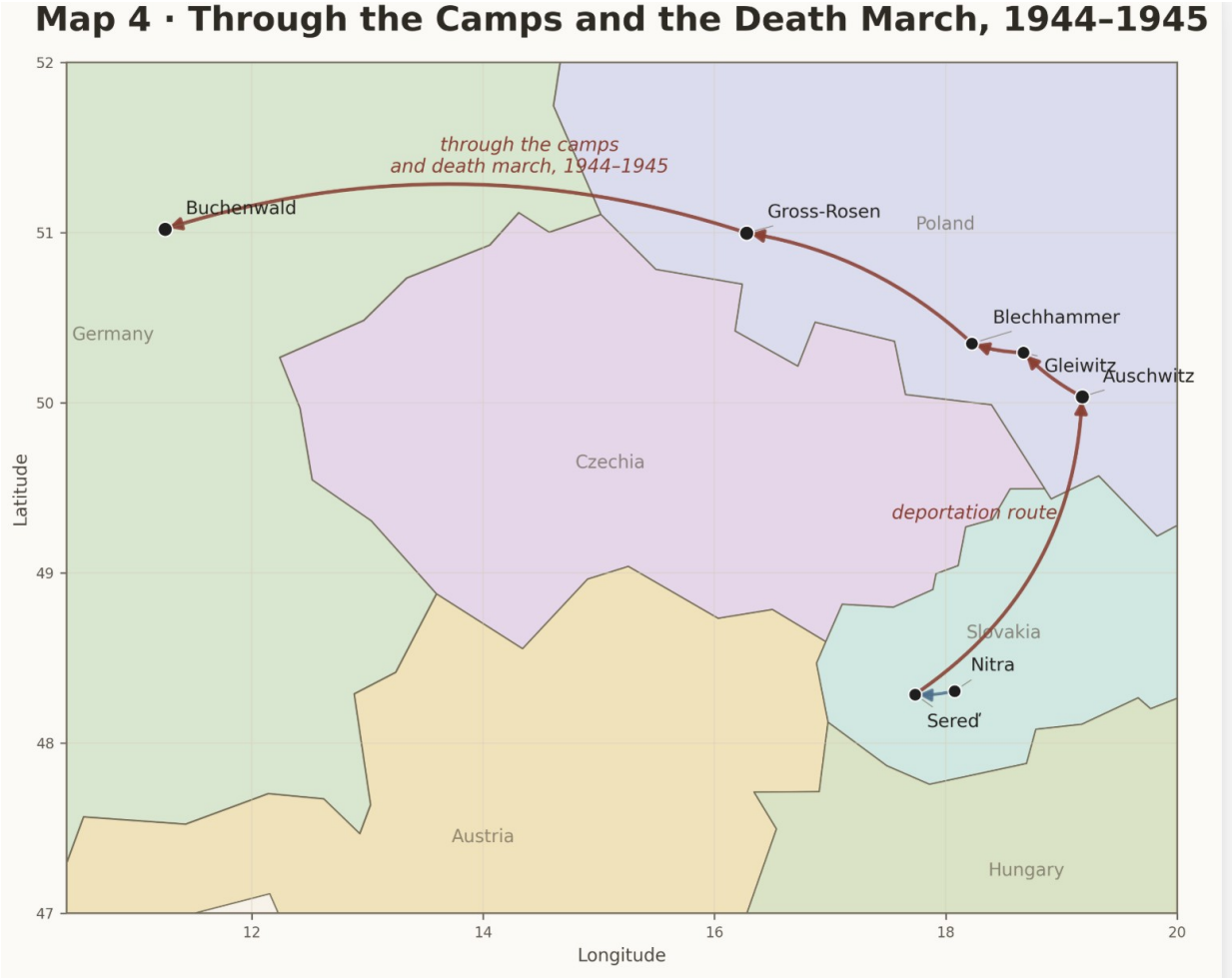
Because his manuscript ends in the beer hall at Nitra, the months that follow cannot be told in Mishko's own words. We tell them, instead, as they are recorded in our family's memory and in the documented history of the camps — plainly, and without putting into his mouth feelings he never wrote down. This much is certain: he survived, and he survived a journey that very few survived.

After the torture at the Národný Dom, Mishko — together with his parents — was put on a transport. In the last months of the war he was moved from camp to camp through the German concentration-camp system: Gleiwitz and Blechhammer, sub-camps in the Auschwitz orbit in Upper Silesia; then Gross-Rosen, in Lower Silesia; and finally Buchenwald, near Weimar in Germany. In January 1945, as the Red Army advanced and the SS emptied the camps in the east, he was forced onto one of the death marches that killed tens of thousands of prisoners in the war's final winter. He endured it. In February 1945 he was among the prisoners liberated from Buchenwald, and he made his way back to Nitra.

SEREĎ

Sereď, north-west of Nitra, was one of the labour camps established by the Slovak State, alongside Nováky and Vyhne. After the German occupation in the autumn of 1944 it became a transit and concentration camp under SS control — the principal departure point for the final deportations of Slovak Jews to Auschwitz and other German camps.

It was to Sereď that the late-1944 transports from Nitra were bound. Mishko's testimony names it as the rumoured destination of the round-up that took him and his parents.



Map 4 · Through the camps and the death march, 1944–1945.

THE CAMPS AND THE DEATH MARCHES, 1944–45

Gleiwitz and Blechhammer were among the network of sub-camps tied to Auschwitz, exploiting prisoners as forced labour in Upper Silesia. Gross-Rosen, in Lower Silesia, was a major concentration camp with a vast system of sub-camps. Buchenwald, near Weimar, was one of the largest camps on German soil; it was liberated in April 1945.

As the Soviet army advanced in the winter of 1944–45, the SS forced hundreds of thousands of prisoners to evacuate the eastern camps on foot, in brutal cold, with little food and summary execution for any who could not keep up. These "death marches" killed an estimated 250,000 prisoners or more in the final months of the war. That Mishko passed through this chain of camps and survived a January death march places him among a small remnant of the fortunate — a word that can only be used here in its grimmest sense.

Our loved father/grandfather passed away, 29 May 1970, before he could finish his testimony, I still remember his words -

NEVER AGAIN!

& our loved mother words -

WHY HE DIDN’T TELL ME?

Liberation and Return

PART SEVEN

Nitra · The Hotel · The Road to Israel

Chapter Sixteen · The Hotel, Lost Again

Mishko came home to a Nitra emptied of the world he had known. His parents did not survive the camps; he carried, his son later wrote, a deep and lifelong regret that he had not been able to save them, though he had saved so many others. He returned to Nitra and managed, for a brief time, to reclaim the family hotel — the Friedrich Löffler Hotel, my Grandfather's Hotel. For a moment it must have seemed that something could be rebuilt from the ashes.

It was not to be. In 1948 Czechoslovakia became a Communist state, and the new government's nationalisation of private business soon stripped the brothers of the hotel and everything else. The Löfflers, who had survived fascism, were now to be dispossessed by its successor. There was nothing left in Slovakia to hold them.

FROM LIBERATION TO THE STATE OF ISRAEL

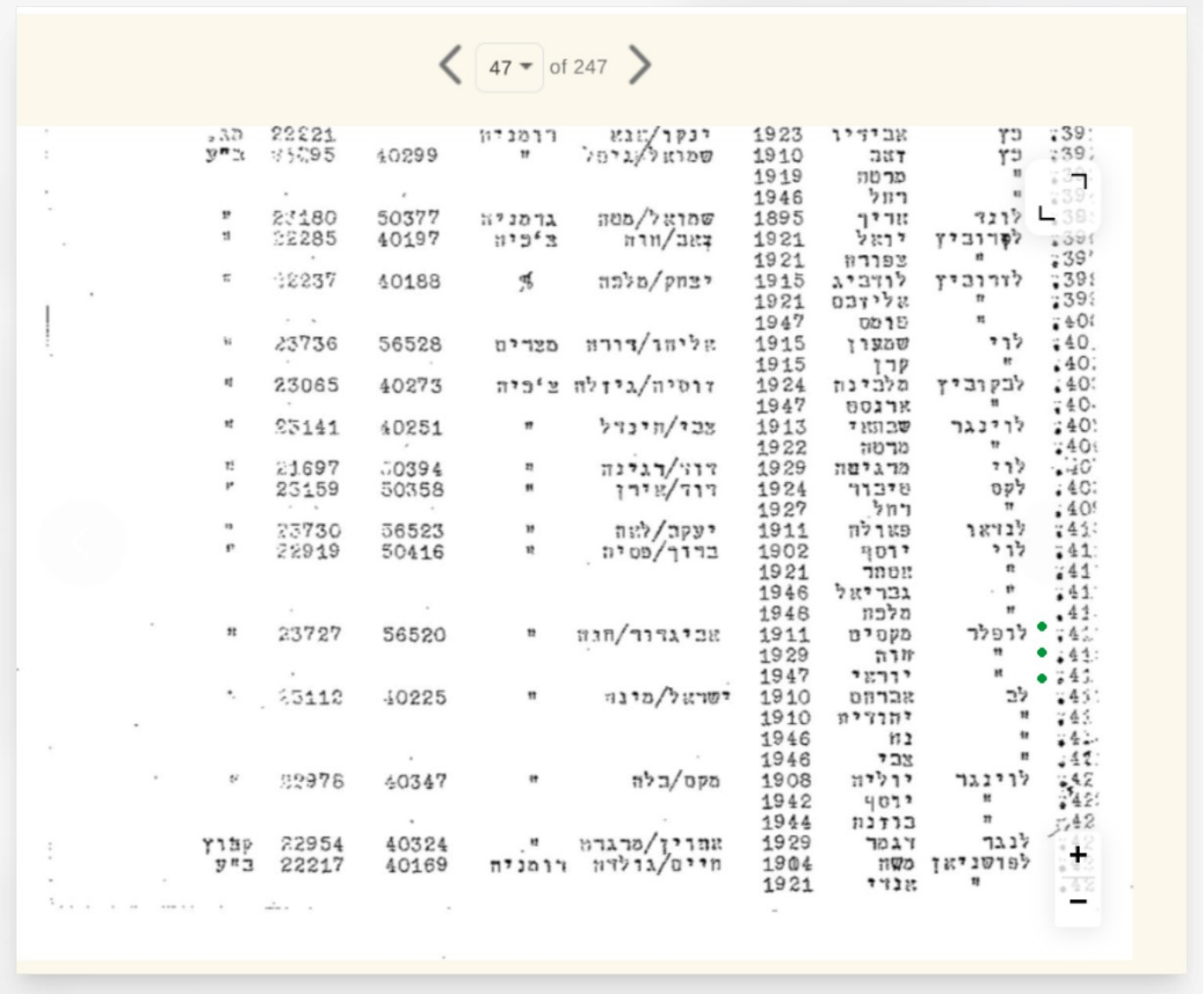
The survivors who emerged from the camps in 1945 faced a Europe that was, for them, a graveyard. Hundreds of thousands lived for years in displaced-persons camps; many sought to reach Mandatory Palestine, often by illegal immigration, against a British blockade. The State of Israel was declared in May 1948, and in the years that followed it absorbed great waves of survivors.

The Löfflers' arrival in Haifa in June 1949 was one story among hundreds of thousands — and, like all of them, singular. They came carrying what they had: a marriage forged after Auschwitz, a young son, a few photographs, and a silence that would last for decades.

Chapter Seventeen · Haifa, 1949

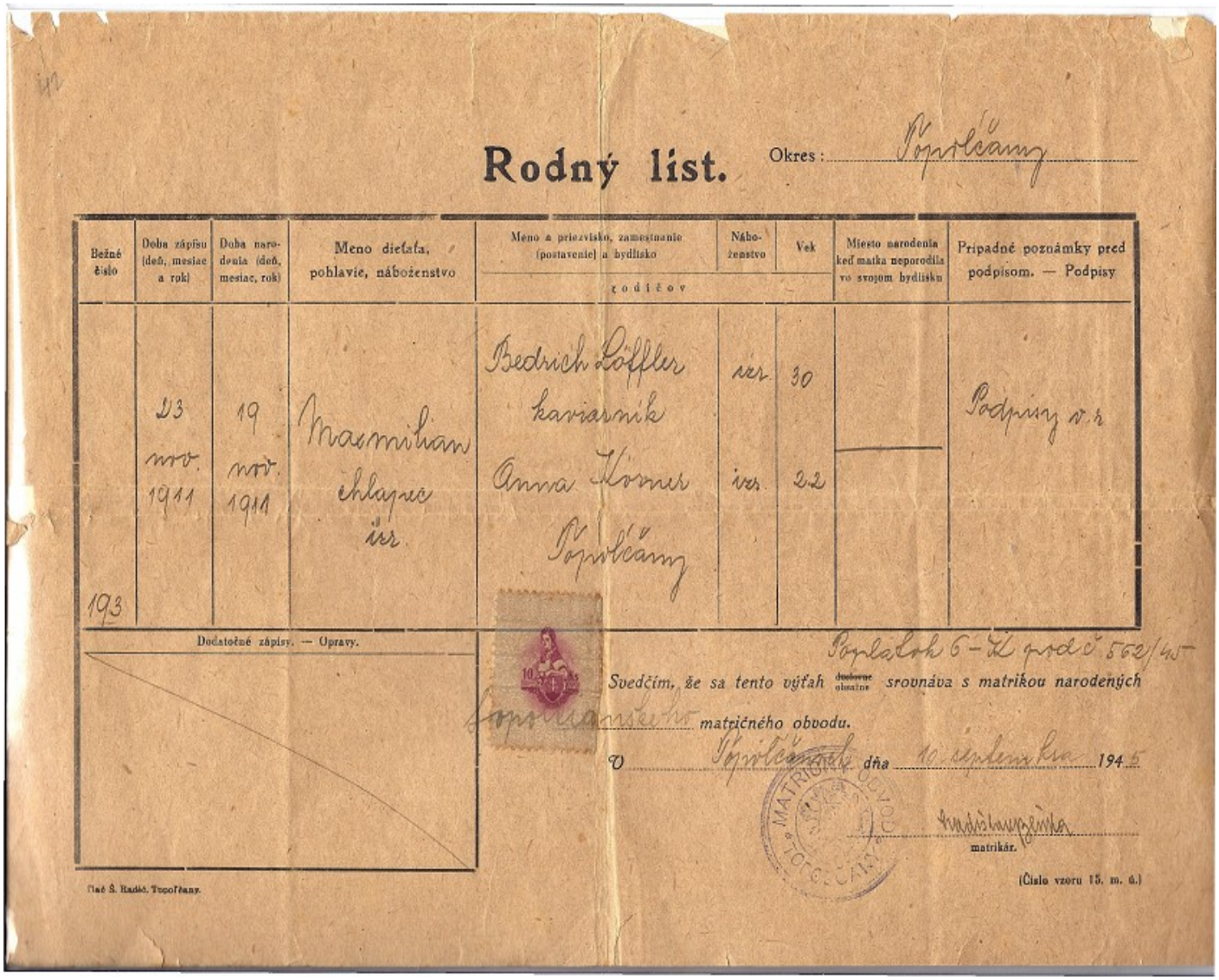
In 1949 Mishko resolved to begin again in the new State of Israel. He had married Eva — Eva Chava Löffler, born Blitz, who had herself survived Auschwitz — and they had a young son, Júri Avigdor, born in Nitra in 1947. On the 6th of June 1949 the family arrived in Haifa aboard the ship Galilah, and there they made their home. A second son — one of the editors of this book — was born to them in Israel a couple of years later.

My family is listed as immigrants who arrived in Israel on the Galila ship on June 6, 1949



In the early days in Haifa my father walked with a suitcase full of delicatessens, and sold them, from house to house. The goods were brought by my Uncle Laly Blitz (Mum’s brother) who brought them from overseas, as he was a chef onboard a ship. Soon later my parents bought a cafe’, operated since 1937 that was a favorite of the British soldiers in Haifa. "Nordeau" cafe’ was the meeting place for the business people, students and lectures from the Hadar Technion, situated opposite the cafe’.

Birth Certificate



Rodný list.

Okres: Popradčany

Bežné číslo	Doba zápisu (deň, mesiac a rok)	Doba narodenia (deň, mesiac, rok)	Meno dieťaťa, pohlavie, náboženstvo	Meno a priezvisko, zamestnanie (postavenie) a bydlisko zodičov	Náboženstvo	Vek	Miesto narodenia keď matka neporodila vo svojom bydlisku	Pripadné poznámky pred podpisom. — Podpisy
193	23 nov. 1911	19 nov. 1911	Maximilian chlapec úr.	Bedrich Löffler kaviarnik Anna Löwner Popradčany	ver. ver.	30 22		Podpisy v.r.

Dodatočné zápisy. — Opravy.

Poplatok 6-Ks prdč 562/45

Svedčím, že sa tento výťah ~~úradne~~ úradovne obsahne srovnáva s matrikou narodených popradčanského matričného obvodu.

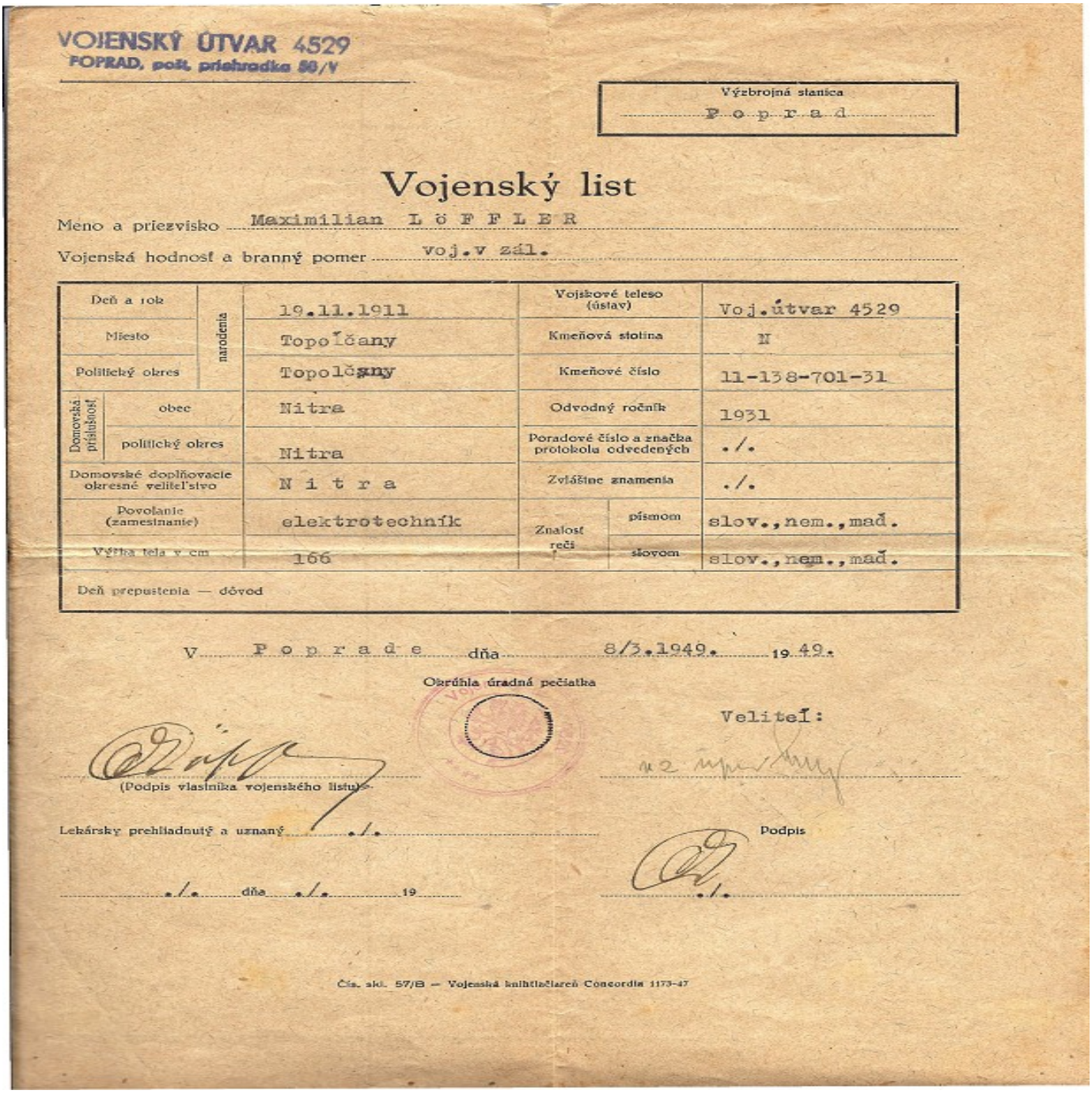
V Popradčanoch dňa 10. septembra 1945

matrikár.

(Číslo vzoru 15. m. ú.)

Tlač Š. Radič. Topoľčany.

Soldier Certificate



VOJENSKÝ ÚTVAR 4529
POPRAD, poš. priehradka 80/V

Výzbrojná stanica
Poprad

Vojenský list

Meno a priezvisko: Maximilian LÖFFLER

Vojenská hodnosť a branný pomer: voj.v zál.

Deň a rok narodenia		19.11.1911	Vojskové teleso (ústav)		Voj.útvar 4529
Miesto narodenia		Topoľčany	Kmeňová slotina		N
Politický okres narodenia		Topoľčany	Kmeňové číslo		11-138-701-31
Domovská príslušnosť	obec	Nitra	Odvodný ročník		1931
	politický okres	Nitra	Poradové číslo a značka protokola odvedených		./.
Domovské doplňovacie okresné veliteľstvo		Nitra	Zvláštne znamenia		./.
Povolanie (zamestnanie)		elektrotechník	Znalosť reči	písmom	slov., nem., mad.
Výška tela v cm		166		slovom	slov., nem., mad.
Deň prepustenia — dôvod					

V Poprade dňa 8/3.1949. 1949.

Okrúhla úradná pečiatka

Veliteľ:

(Podpis vlastníka vojenského listu)

Lekársky prehliadnutý a uznaný ./.

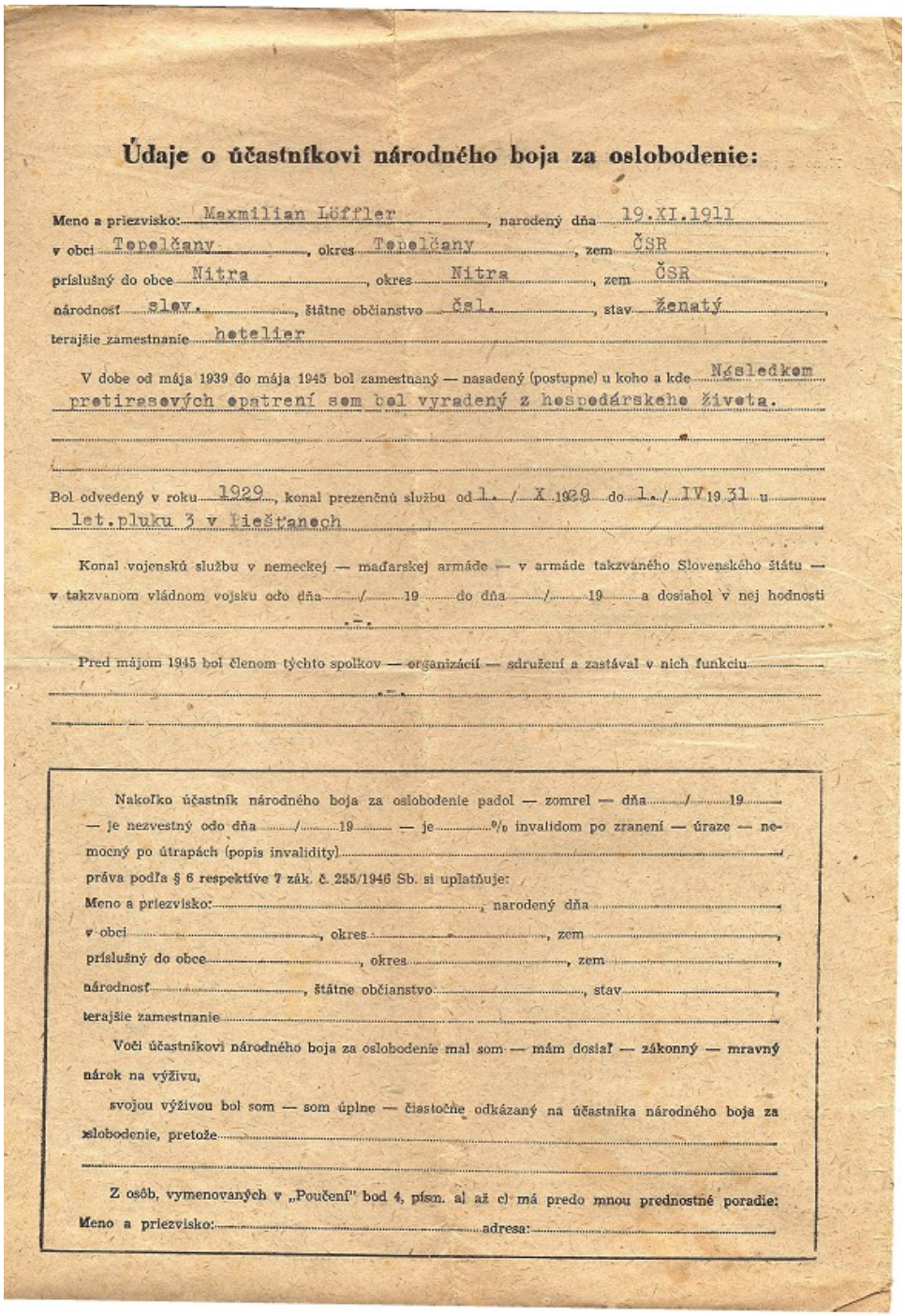
Podpis ./.

./. dňa ./. 19

Čís. skl. 57/B — Vojenská knihtlačiareň Concordia 1173-47

A certificate from the Ministry of the Interior confirming that Mishko was in a youth movement, a soldier in the Slovak Air Force from 1929-1931 and was in

political arrest during the war as well as in Nazi concentration camps and today he is a hotelier.



Údaje o účastníkovi národného boja za oslobodenie:

Meno a priezvisko: Maxmilian Löffler, narodený dňa 19.XI.1911
v obci Tepeľčany, okres Tepeľčany, zem ČSR,
príslušný do obce Nitra, okres Nitra, zem ČSR,
národnosť slov., štátne občianstvo čsl., stav ženatý,
terajšie zamestnanie hotelier

V dobe od mája 1939 do mája 1945 bol zamestnaný — nasadený (postupne) u koho a kde Následkom protirasových opatrení som bol vyradený z hospodárskeho života.

Bol odvedený v roku 1929, konal prezenčnú službu od 1./X.1929 do 1./IV.1931 u let.pluku 3 v Piešťanoch

Konal vojenskú službu v nemeckej — maďarskej armáde — v armáde takzvaného Slovenského štátu — v takzvanom vládnom vojsku odo dňa ../..19 do dňa ../..19 a dosiahol v nej hodnosti .-.

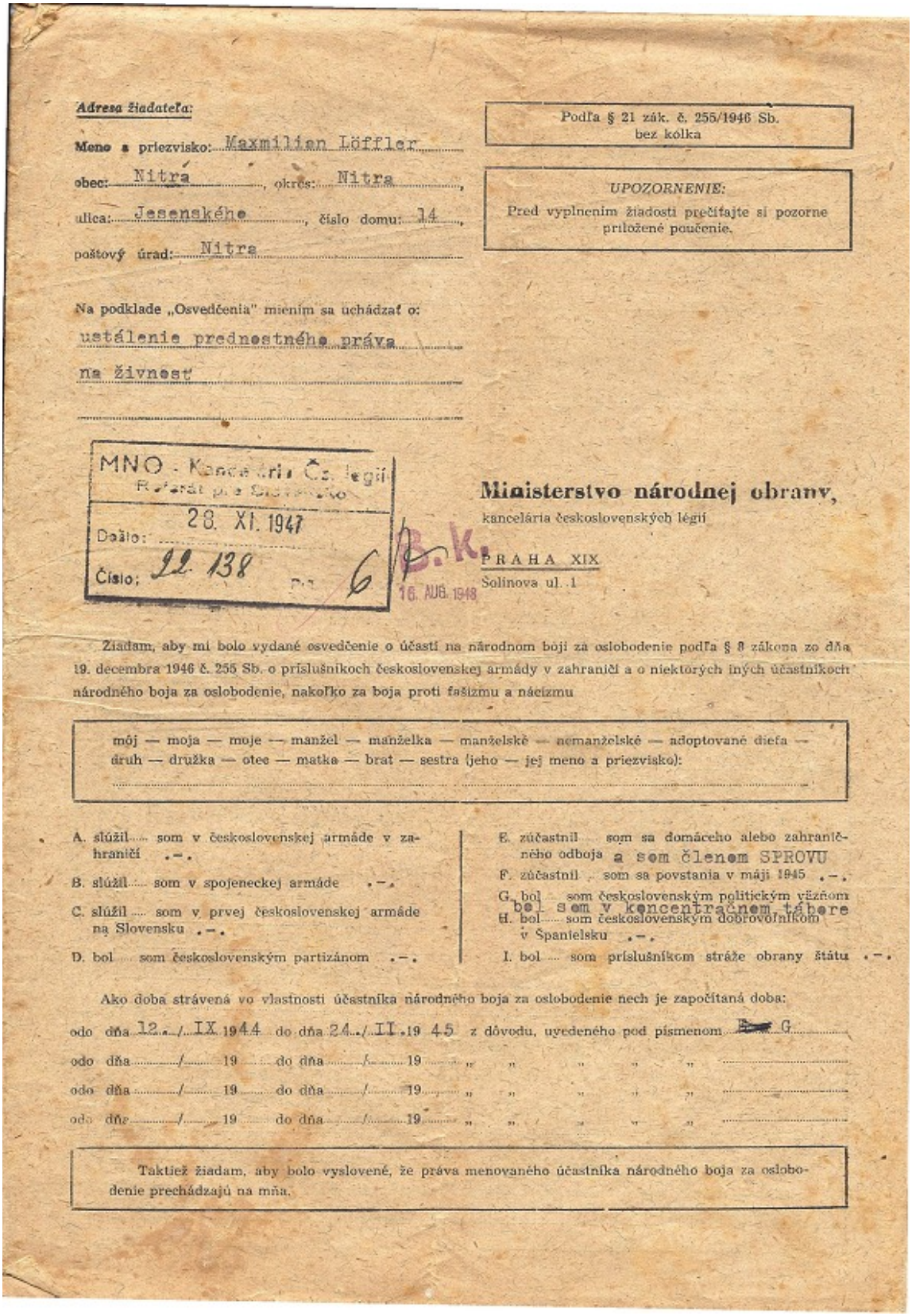
Pred májom 1945 bol členom týchto spolkov — organizácií — združení a zastával v nich funkciu .-.

Nakoľko účastník národného boja za oslobodenie padol — zomrel — dňa ../..19 — je nezvestný odo dňa ../..19 — je ..% invalidom po zranení — úraze — nemocný po útrapách (popis invalidity)
práva podľa § 6 respektíve 7 zák. č. 255/1946 Sb. si uplatňuje:
Meno a priezvisko: , narodený dňa
v obci , okres , zem ,
príslušný do obce , okres , zem ,
národnosť , štátne občianstvo , stav ,
terajšie zamestnanie

Voči účastníkovi národného boja za oslobodenie mal som — mám dosiaľ — zákonný — mravný nárok na výživu,

svojou výživou bol som — som úplne — čiastočne odkázaný na účastníka národného boja za oslobodenie, pretože

Z osôb, vymenovaných v „Poučení" bod 4, písm. a) až c) má predo mnou prednostné poradie:
Meno a priezvisko: adresa:



Adresa žiadateľa:

Meno a priezvisko: Maxmilian Löffler

obec: Nitra, okres: Nitra,

ulica: Jesenského, číslo domu: 14,

poštový úrad: Nitra

Podľa § 21 zák. č. 255/1946 Sb.
bez kolka

UPOZORNENIE:
Pred vyplnením žiadosti prečítajte si pozorne priložené poučenie.

Na podklade „Osvedčenia" mienim sa uchádzať o:
ustálenie prednostného práva
na živnosť

MNO - Kancelária Čs. légií
Referát pre Slovensko
Došlo: 28. XI. 1947
Číslo: 22.138 Príl. 6

B.K.
16. AUG. 1948

Ministerstvo národnej obrany,
kancelária československých légií
PRAHA XIX
Solinova ul. 1

Žiadam, aby mi bolo vydané osvedčenie o účasti na národnom boji za oslobodenie podľa § 8 zákona zo dňa 19. decembra 1946 č. 255 Sb. o príslušníkoch československej armády v zahraničí a o niektorých iných účastníkoch národného boja za oslobodenie, nakoľko za boja proti fašizmu a nácizmu

môj — moja — moje — manžel — manželka — manželské — nemanželské — adoptované dieťa — druh — družka — otec — matka — brat — sestra (jeho — jej meno a priezvisko):

A. slúžil — som v československej armáde v zahraničí .—.

B. slúžil — som v spojeneckej armáde .—.

C. slúžil — som v prvej československej armáde na Slovensku .—.

D. bol — som československým partizánom .—.

E. zúčastnil — som sa domáceho alebo zahraničného odboja a som členom SPROVU

F. zúčastnil — som sa povstania v máji 1945 .—.

G. bol — som československým politickým väzňom bol som v koncentračnom tábore

H. bol — som československým dobrovoľníkom v Španielsku .—.

I. bol — som príslušníkom stráže obrany štátu .—.

Ako doba strávená vo vlastnosti účastníka národného boja za oslobodenie nech je započítaná doba:

odo dňa 12./IX 1944 do dňa 24./II. 1945 z dôvodu, uvedeného pod písmenom G

odo dňa ../.. 19.. do dňa ../.. 19.. „ „ „ „ „ „

odo dňa ../.. 19.. do dňa ../.. 19.. „ „ „ „ „ „

odo dňa ../.. 19.. do dňa ../.. 19.. „ „ „ „ „ „

Taktiež žiadam, aby bolo vyslovené, že práva menovaného účastníka národného boja za oslobodenie prechádzajú na mňa.

The concentration camp where my father was held

From 12/9/1944	Till 9/10/1944	Seredi
10/10/1944	14/10/1944	Oswiecime
15/10/1944	9/1/1945	Gleiwitz
10/1/1945	24/2/1945	Blechhamer The death march the passed via Gross-Rosen / Buchenwald

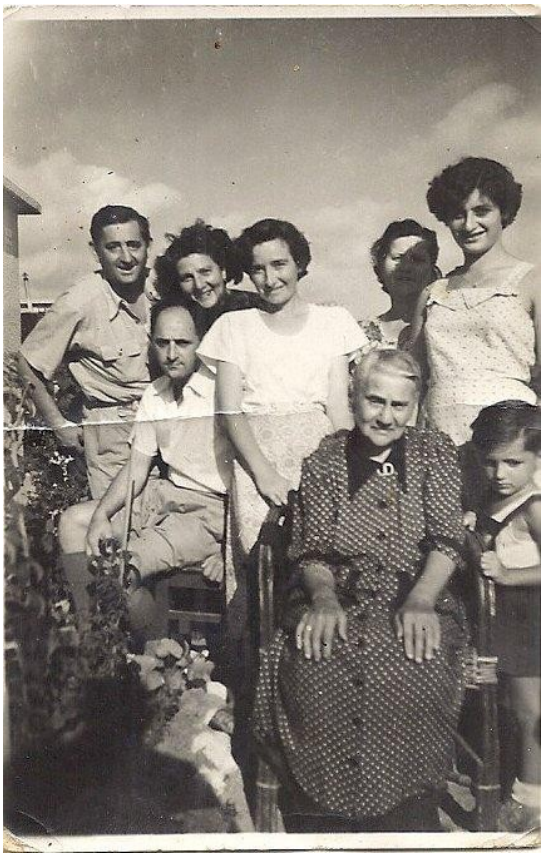
In 1945 approximately 4,000 prisoners were taken to the death march, including my father. 800 of them were executed during the march. The survivors arrived at the Gross-Rosen concentration camp and after that were transferred to the Buchenwald concentration camp.

• • • •

Our surviving family members, from Vienna and Nitra. Among them were the aunt's sisters Mila, Hilda and uncle Karl who fled from Vienna to Palestine after my father's arrest

The picture was taken at my brother's wedding - Juri & Revital Löffler (Kedem), September 1970

Happy days, on the Hotel Löffler roof/balcony, after the war before the hotel confiscated by the communist party



Zážitky

PART EIGHT

The Notebook · Eva’s Tears · The Keeping of Memory

Chapter Eighteen · The Decision to Write

For most of his life in Israel, Mishko said little of the war. He rarely spoke of it to his children, and — as they would learn only later, and to their grief — not even to his wife. The wounds were too deep and the memories too vivid; he chose, like so many of his generation, to build a normal life over them rather than to reopen them. He focused on his family and his business and let the past keep its silence.

It was only in the late 1960s, as his health began to fail, that he changed his mind. He decided to "close the circle," to set down what he had witnessed so that it would not be lost — to contribute, as he put it, to the remembrance of the Holocaust. He took out a small black notebook and labelled it, in Slovak, Zážitky — Recollections — and began to write in his careful hand. He did not get far before the effort, and his illness, overtook him.

In those last years he also gathered the physical evidence he had kept and gave it into safekeeping. To the Ghetto Fighters’ House Museum, Lohamei HaGeta’ot, in Israel, he donated the underground documents still in his possession, photographs of the camps, his prisoner’s uniform, the yellow Star of David he had been forced to wear — and a bar of soap said to be made from human fat. He wanted these things preserved as evidence, so that no one could ever say it had not happened. Maximilian "Moshe" Löffler died on the 29th of May 1970, at the age of fifty-nine, his memoir unfinished, his testimony secured.

Chapter Nineteen · Why Didn’t He Tell Me?

The notebook lay hidden in a cupboard, fifty-six pages of Slovak, for years after his death — safeguarded, in time, by the family’s Aunt Magda. When at last his widow and son sat down in the 1990s to translate it into Hebrew, Eva wept for days. She had been married to this man for more than twenty years, and only now, page by page, did she learn the full extent of what he had suffered and what he had done before she ever knew him. "Why didn’t he tell me?" she kept asking. Her son understood why: that generation tried to shield the people they loved from the horrors they carried.

In 2014 the manuscript was translated professionally into English, the version that underlies this book, and the original handwritten notebook was entrusted to Yad Vashem in Jerusalem for safekeeping. That same year the Austrian Holocaust Victims’ Information and Support Center in Vienna invited the family to visit the Rossauer Lände prison where Mishko had been held in 1938 — a poignant closing of another circle.

His son has written the words that stand, now, in place of an embrace he never got to give: that he wishes he could have sat with his father, and held him, and told him how proud the whole family is of his unselfish, brave actions. We say it again here, on behalf of everyone who reads this. His courage, his sacrifice, and his steadfast humanity in the face of evil are an inspiration. Through these pages his voice — quiet, but unwavering — joins the chorus of those who survived and resisted, and who insist that the world remember.

May his experiences, and the lives of all those mentioned in these pages, be remembered for generations to come.

The Evidence

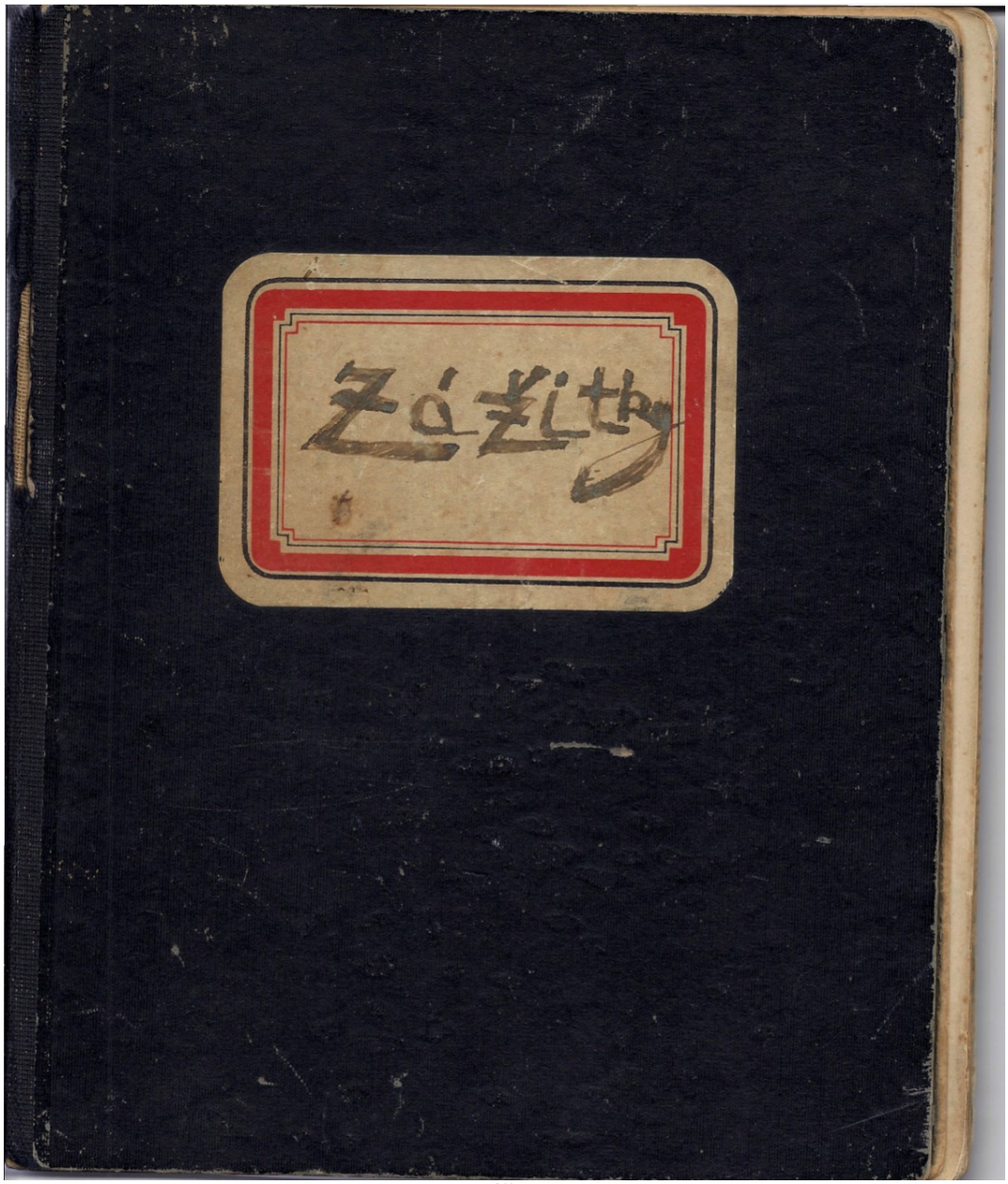
APPENDICES

Photographs · The Original Manuscript · Names · Places · Timeline · Sources

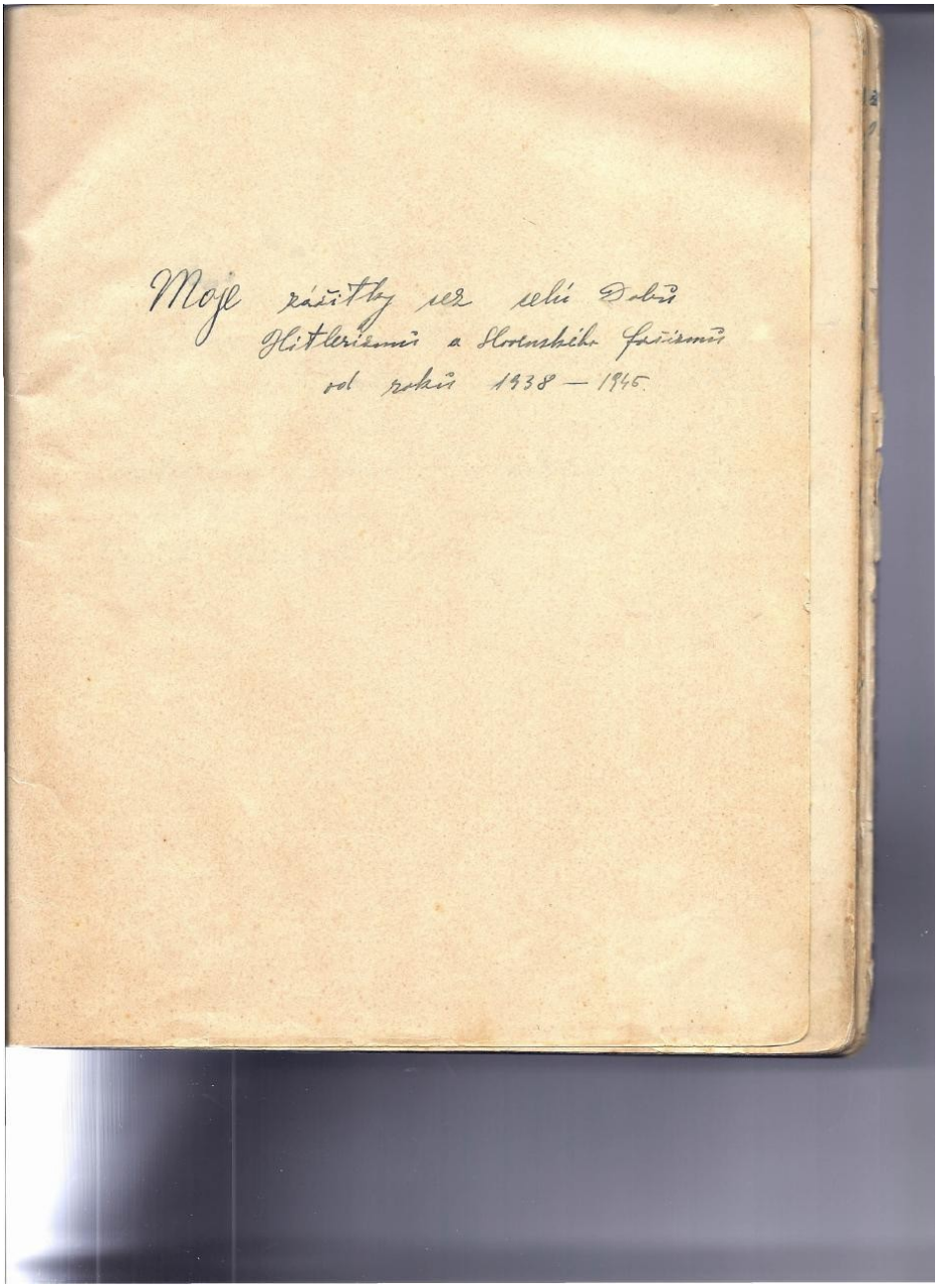
Appendix A · The Original Manuscript

What follows is the evidence in its purest form: every surviving page of Maximilian Löffler’s original handwritten notebook, reproduced in order. He wrote in Slovak, beginning with the words that the wounds of the past were still fresh and the memories very vivid, and that it was therefore very difficult for him to write. The final page is in a different hand — that of his wife, Eva, who carried his words across into Hebrew so that their children could read them. The original notebook is preserved in the archives of Yad Vashem, Jerusalem.

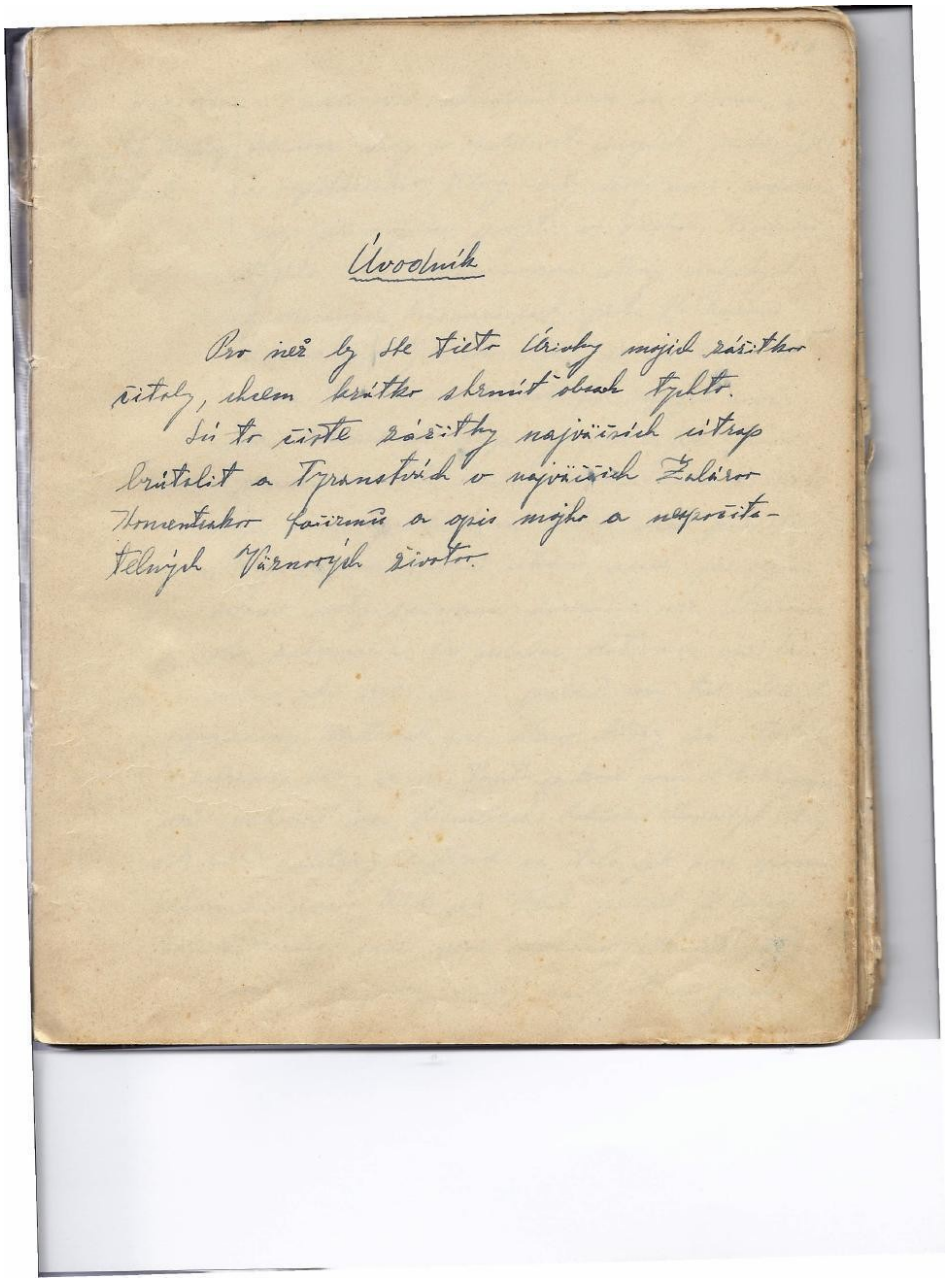
We reproduce these pages whole and unedited. We ask that they be read as handwriting first and text second — as the physical trace of a man determined, against illness and against memory itself, to be believed.



The notebook cover — “Zážitky” (Recollections).



Introductory page, in the author's hand.

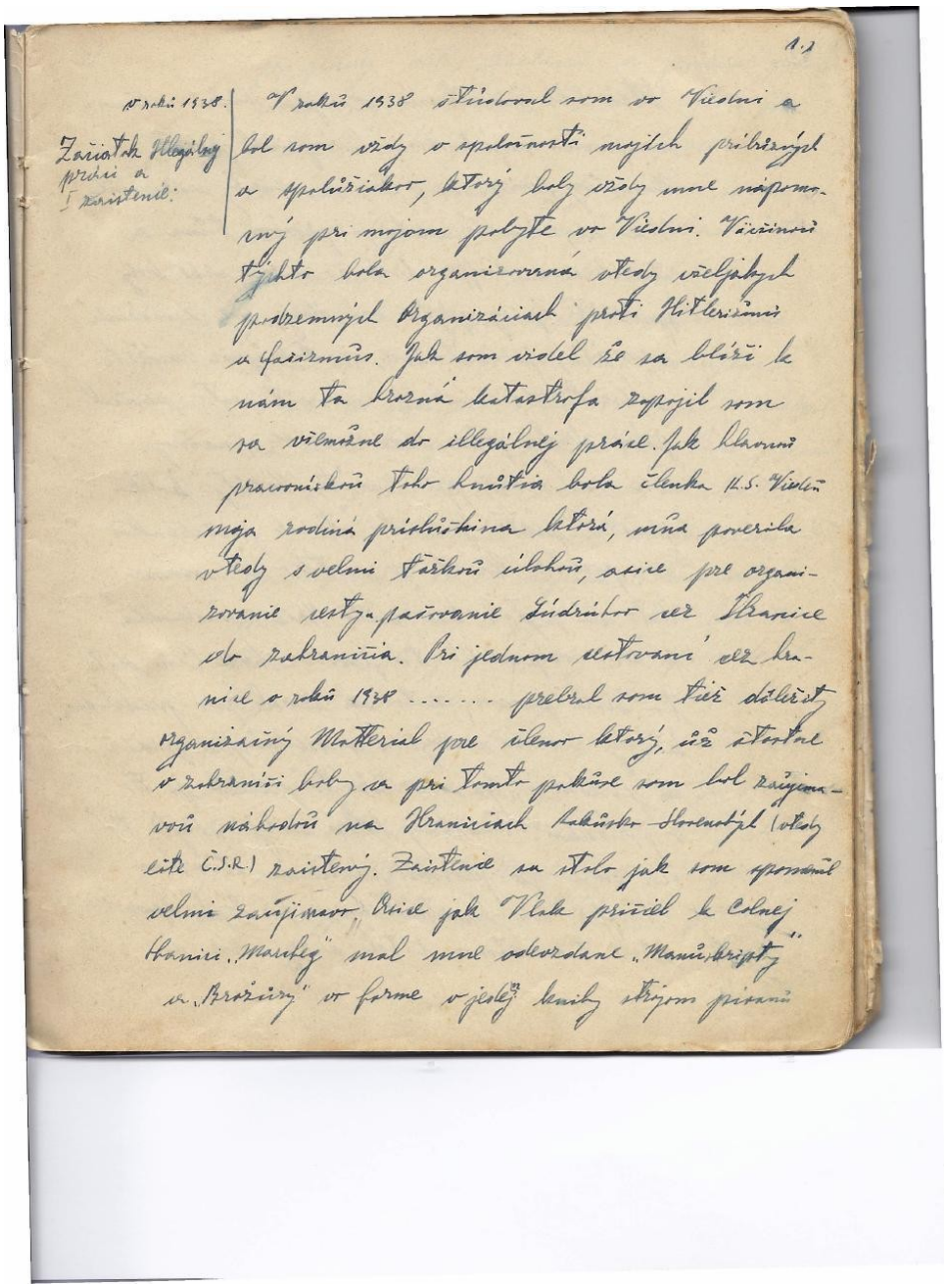


Úvodník

Pro ně by ste tieto úrivky mojich zážitkov čítali, chcem krátko zhrnúť obsah týchto.

Sú to čisté zážitky najväčších útrap trýzlivých a týranských v najväčších žalárov koncentrákov fašizmu a opis mojho a nespočítateľných väznených životov.

Introductory page, in the author's hand.

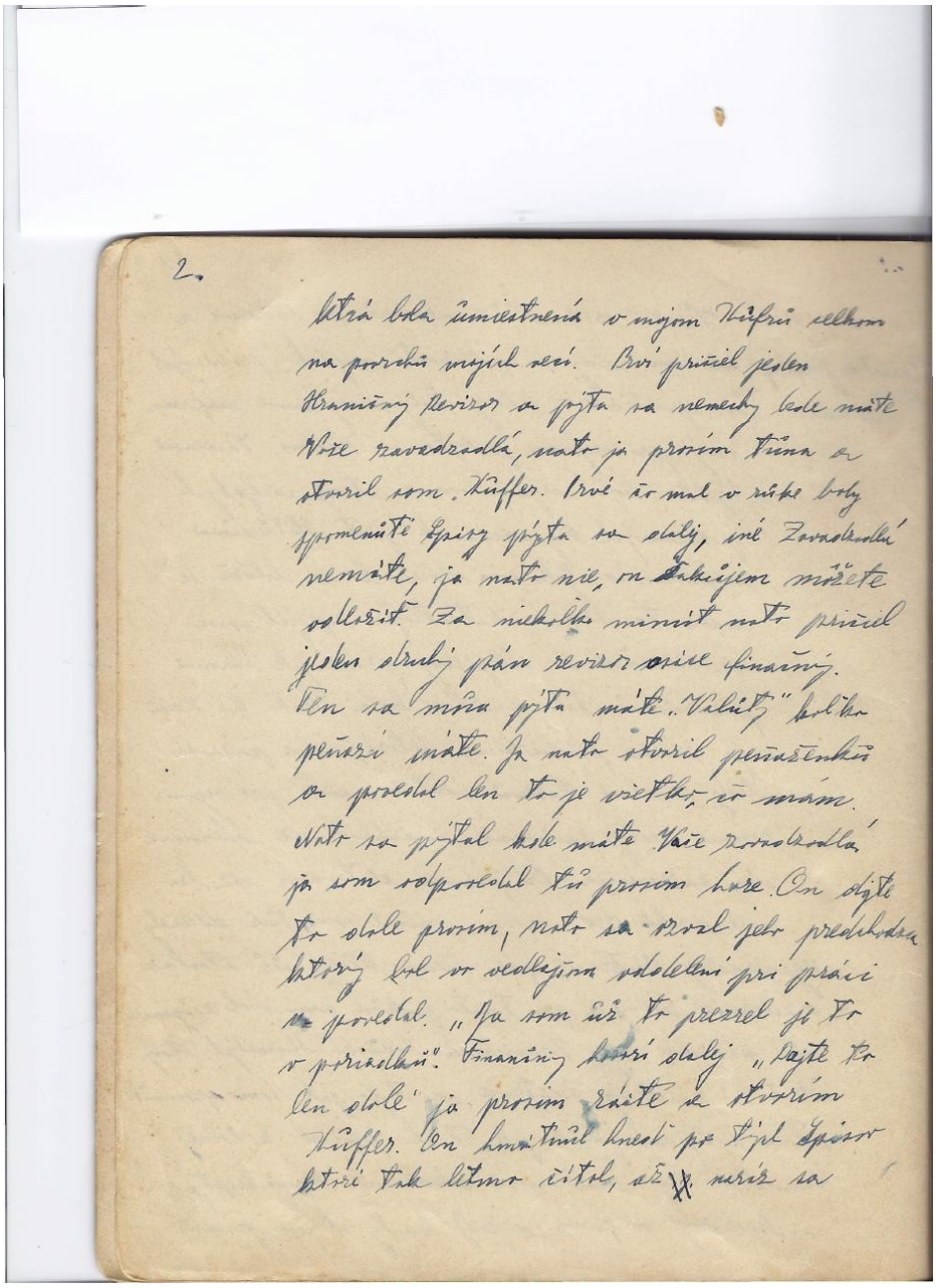


v roku 1938.

Začiatok illegálnej práce a I. zaistenie.

V roku 1938 študoval som vo Viedni a bol som vždy v spolupracovníctve mojich priateľov a spolužiakov, ktorí boli vždy mne napomocný pri mojom pobyte vo Viedni. Väčšinou táto bola organizovaná vtedy veľkých podzemných organizáciách proti Hitlerizmu a fašizmu. Jak som videl že sa blíži k nám ta hrozná katastrofa zapojil som sa vďačne do illegálnej práce. Jak hlavná pracovníčka toho kruhu bola členka K.S. Viedň moja rodiná priateľka ktorá, mňa poverila vtedy s veľmi ťažkou úlohou, a síce pre organizovanie cestu-prevádzanie židov cez hranice do zahraničia. Pri jednom cestovaní cez hranice v roku 1938 ..... prebral som ďalší organizačný Materiál pre členov ktorý, už ďalej v zahraničí boly sa pri tomto prekáže som bol zajatý vojnou nákazou na Hraniciach Rakúsko-Slovenských (vtedy ešte ČSR) zaistený. Zaistenie sa stalo jak som spomenul veľmi zaujímavo. Keď jak Nemci prišli k colnej hranici „Marchegg" mal mne odovzdané „Manuskript" v „Brašňe" vo forme v jakej knihy obvyklom písaní

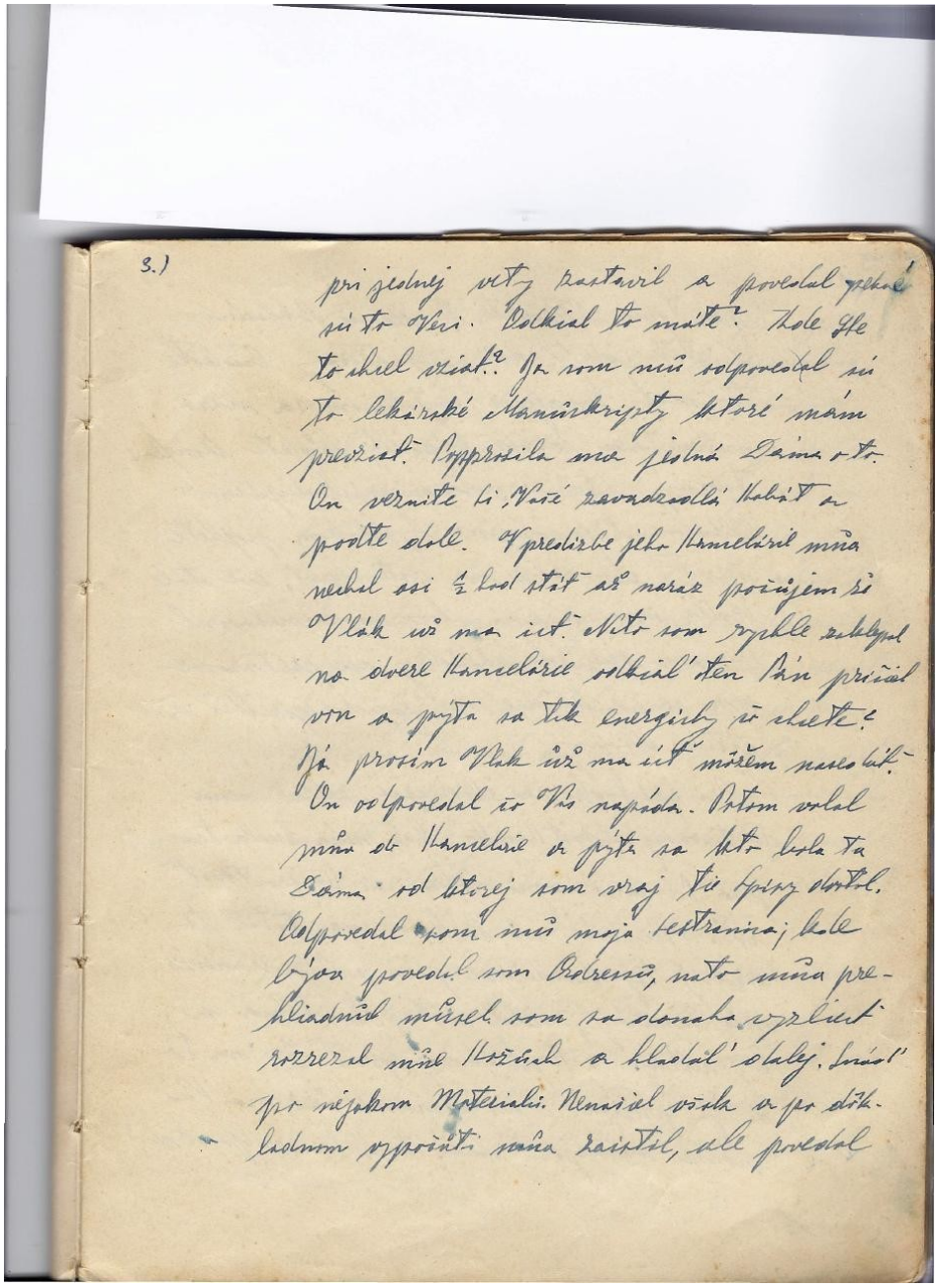
Original manuscript — page 1



2.

Ktorá bola umiestnená v mojom kúpeľnom celkom na povrchu mojich vecí. Prvý prišiel jeden Hraničný Revízor a pýta sa nemecky kde máte Vaše zavadzadlá, načo ja prosím Vám a otvoril som Kuffer. Prvé čo mal v ruke boly spomenuté Spisy pýta sa ďalej, iné Zavadzadlá nemáte, ja načo nie, on ďalekejším môžete odletieť. Za niekoľko minút načo prišiel jeden druhý pán revízor colné finančný. Ten sa mňa pýta máte „Valúty" koľko peňazí máte. Ja načo otvoril peňaženku a povedal len to je všetko čo máme. Načo sa pýtal kde máte Vaše zavadzadlá ja som odpovedal tú prosím hore. On dajte to dole prosím, načo sa zvrátil jeho predchodca ktorý bol na vedľajšom odolelení pri práci a povedal. „Ja som už to prezrel je to v poriadku". Finančný hovorí ďalej „dajte to len dole" ja prosím ráčte si otvoriť Kuffer. On hmatnul hneď po Štýl Spisov ktorí tak ľahko čítal, že ##. načiž sa

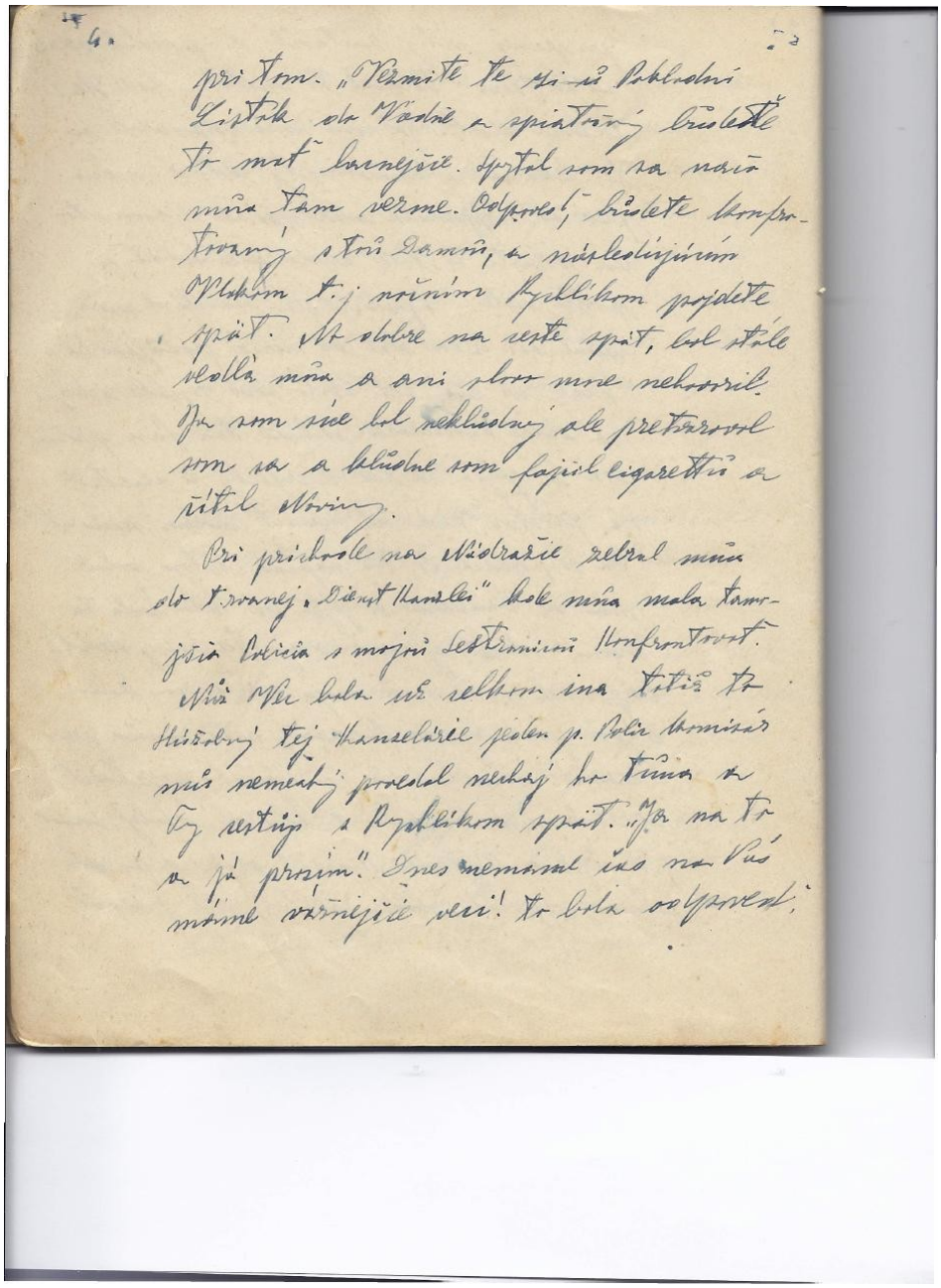
Original manuscript — page 2



3.)

prijatelovej vety zastavil a povedal jeho
sú to Veri. Volkial to máte? Kole Ste
to skúsil získať? Ja som mu odpovedal sú
to lekárske rukopisy ktoré mám
preložiť. Vyprosila ma jeho Dáma o to.
On vernite ti. Vaše zavadzajú kabát a
poďte ďalej. V predizbe jeho kancelárie mňa
nechal asi ½ hod stáť až nakoniec pozvú jem sa
v Vlak už ma ide. Niečo som zpykle zabelgal
na dvere kancelárie odkiaľ ten Pán prišiel
von a pýta sa tak energicky čo chcete?
Já prosím Vlak už ma ide môžem nastúpiť.
On odpovedal čo Vás napáda. Potom volal
mňa do kancelárie a pýtal sa kto bola ta
Dáma od ktorej som vraj čo list odovzdal.
Odpovedal som mu moja sestrenica; kole
čoho povedal som Odrezaný, načo mňa pre-
hliadnuť musel som na dlaňach vyzliecť
rozrezal mi kožúch a kladal' ďalej. Snáď
po nejakom Materiali. Nenašiel však a po dô-
kladnom vypočutí mňa zaistil, ale povedal

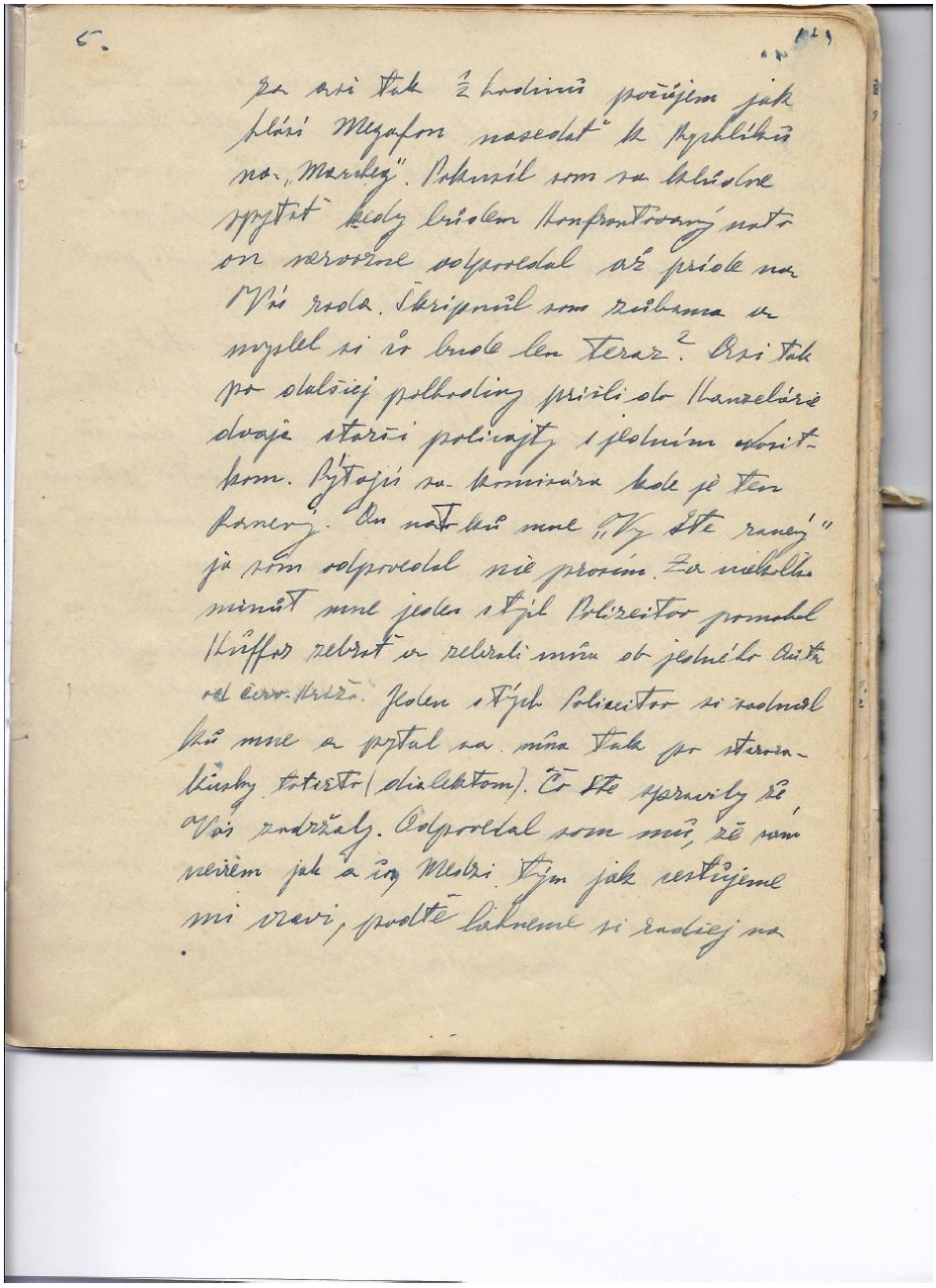
Original manuscript — page 3



pri tom. „Vezmite ste si ešte Pohľadnicu
Listok ale Vodné a spiatočný Lístok
to mať bezplatne. Spýtal som sa naň
mňa tam verne. Odpovedal, bývalete konfe-
rovaný s Krú Damou, a nápleslivým
Oplakom k. j. novinám Republikom pojdete
späť. Ak sľúbe na cesty späť, bol stále
vedľa mňa a ani slovo mne nehovoril.
Ja som síce bol nekľudný ale pretvaroval
som sa a kľudne som fajčil cigaretku a
čítal Noviny.

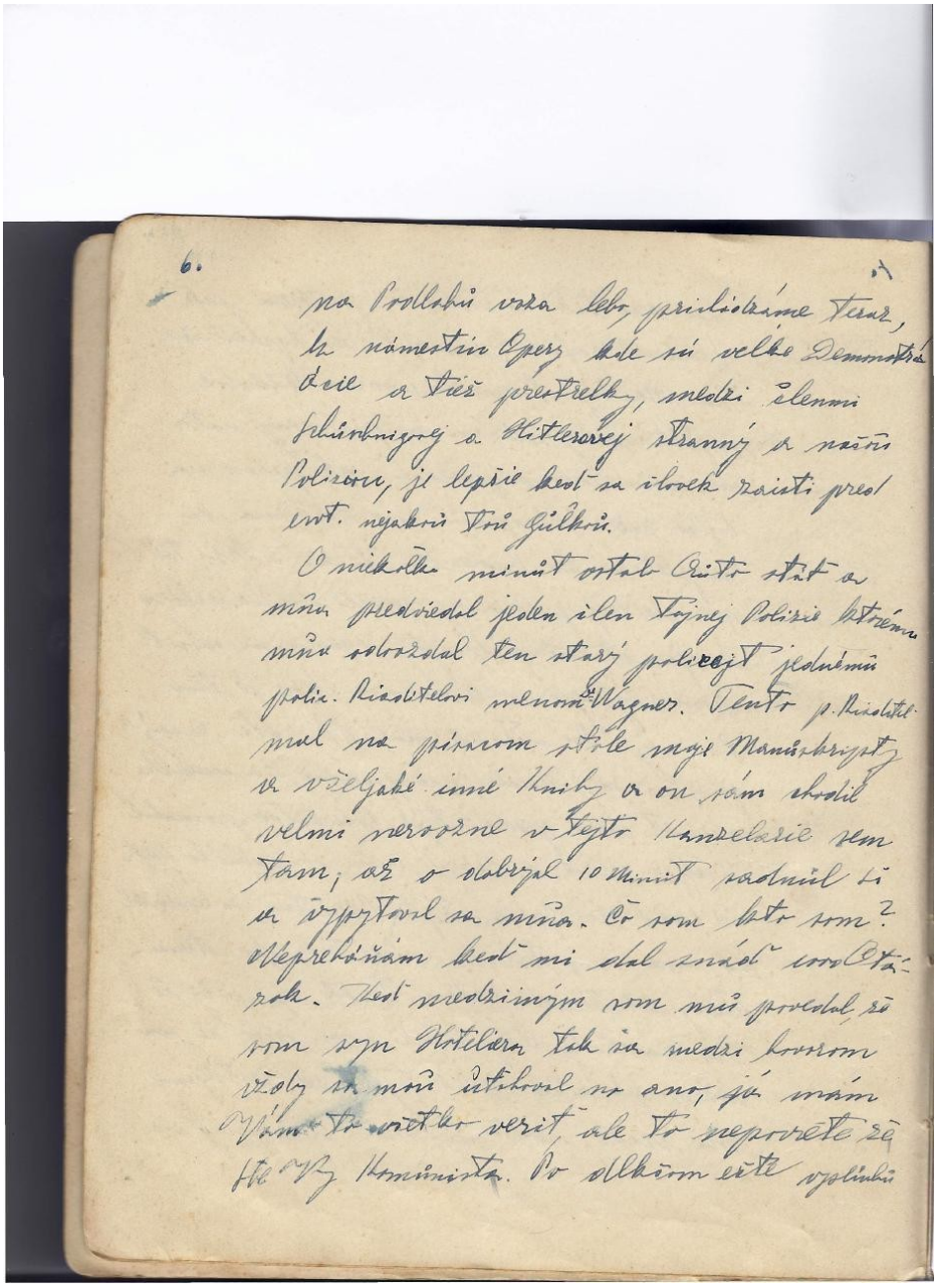
Pri príchode na Miestnáčie zobral mňa
do krásnej „Dient Hanzlei" kde mňa mala tam-
jšia Policia s mojou Sestrenicou konfrontovať.
Keď Ale bola už celkom iná Sestra ta
Hlúpeho tej Hanzlárie jeden p. Policajný komisár
mňa nemecky povedal nechaj ho Tuna sa
Ty vrátiš s Republikom späť. „Ja na to
sa já prisám." Dnes nemôžeš ísť na Vás
máme vážnejšie veci! To bola odpoveď.

Original manuscript — page 4



5.

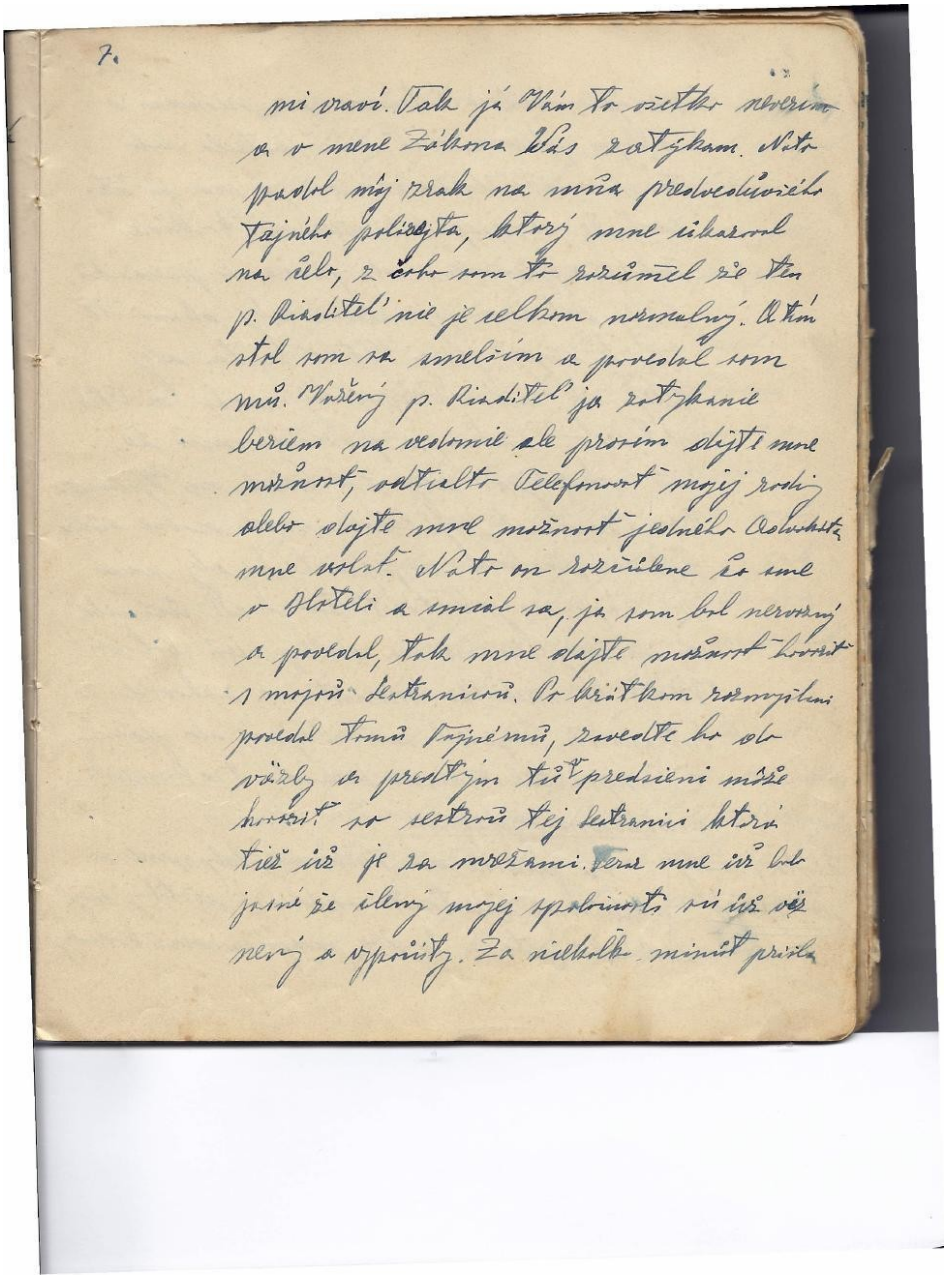
po asi tak ½ hodinu počujem jak
plási Mezafon nasedat k bytlíku
na „Marxáč". Pokúsil som sa bližšie
zistiť kedy bližším kompartmentový vlak
on zrovna odpravoval až príde na
Váš rad. Skrípnul som zubama a
myslel si že bude len teraz? Asi tak
po dalšej polhodine prišli do kanzelárie
dvaja starší policajti s plným vý-
strojom. Bytujú na komisárke kde je ten
konec. On nato keď mne „Vy ste ranený"
ja som odpovedal nič prosím. Za niekoľko
minút mne jeden z tých policajtov pomohol
Hüffer zobrať a zobrali mňa do jedného auta
od červeného kríža. Jeden z tých policajtov si zapálil
šiš mne a pýtal sa mňa tak po slovenský
(dialektom). Čo ste zpravily že,
a Váš zadržali. Odpovedal som mu, že nám
nerieši jak a čo. Medzi tým jako rozprávame
mi vravi, prosím Vás radšej na



6.

na Prokopově vrchu lebo, prichádzame tesne,
k námestiu Opery kde sú veľké Demonštrácie
a tiež prestrelky, medzi členmi
Schutzbundovej a Hitlerovej stranný a našimi
Políciou, je lepšie keď sa človek zdiaľka pozerá
event. nejakých tých guľôk.

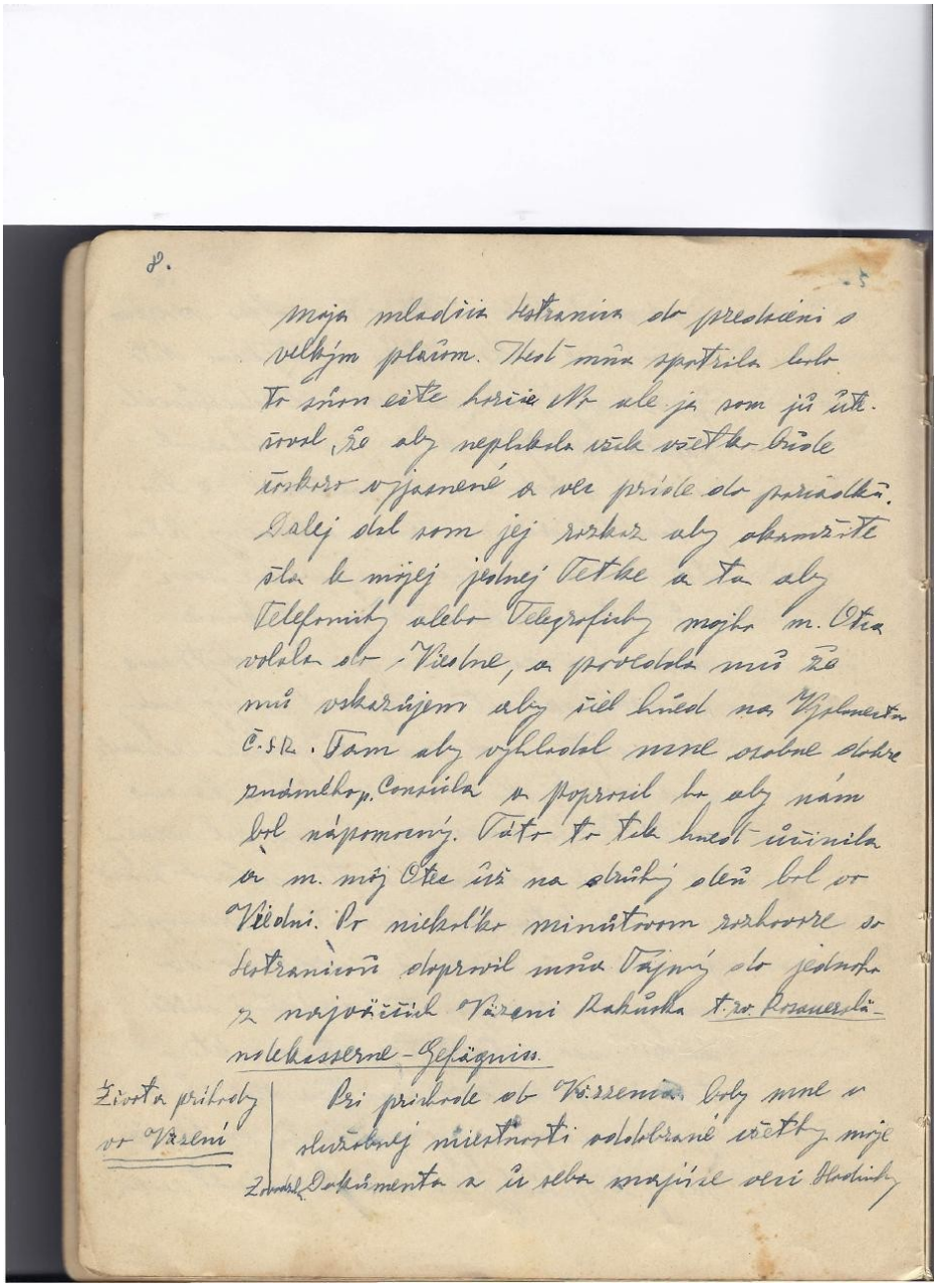
O niekoľko minút ostalo Ríšske státne
mňa predviedol jeden člen Tajnej Polície Štátnej
mňa odovzdal ten starý policajt jednému
polic. Radcovi menom Wagner. Tento p. Radca
mal na písacom stole moje Manuskripty
a všeljaké iné knihy a on sám chodil
veľmi nervózne v tejto kancelárie sem
tam; až o dobrých 10 minút sadnul si
a vypočúval ma. Čo som kto som?
Odpovedám keď mi dal znáť cez okno
rok. Keď medzitým som mu povedal že
som syn Hoteliera tak sa medzi dverami
vždy sa mňa opýtával no ano, ja mám
Vám to všetko veriť ale to neprovedte že
ste vy Komunista. Po dlhšom ešte výsluchu



7.

mi vravi. Tak ja Vám to všetko neverím
a v mene Pánboha Vás zatýkam. Na to
pozrel môj zrak na mňa preslovoviceho
Tajného policajta, ktorý mne ukazoval
na čelo, z čoho som to rozumel že ten
p. Riaditeľ nie je celkom normalný. A tým
stol som na zmeškám a povedal som
mu. Vážený p. Riaditeľ ja zatýkanie
beriem na vedomie ale prosím dajte mne
možnosť, odtiahnuť Telefonovať mojej rodi
alebo dajte mne možnosť jednému človeku
mne ušlať. Keď on rozčúlene čo mne
v Hlohovci a smial sa, ja som bol nervózny
a povedal, tak mne dajte možnosť hovoriť
s mojou sestrenicou. Po krátkom rozmyslení
povedal mi Tajné mu, zavolajte ho ale
vážte a predtým než predsieni môže
hovoriť so sestrou tej sestrenici ktorá
tiež už je za mrežami. Veru mne už bolo
jasné že účelom mojej spolunosti nie je vec
nový a vypočuty. Za niekoľko minút prišla

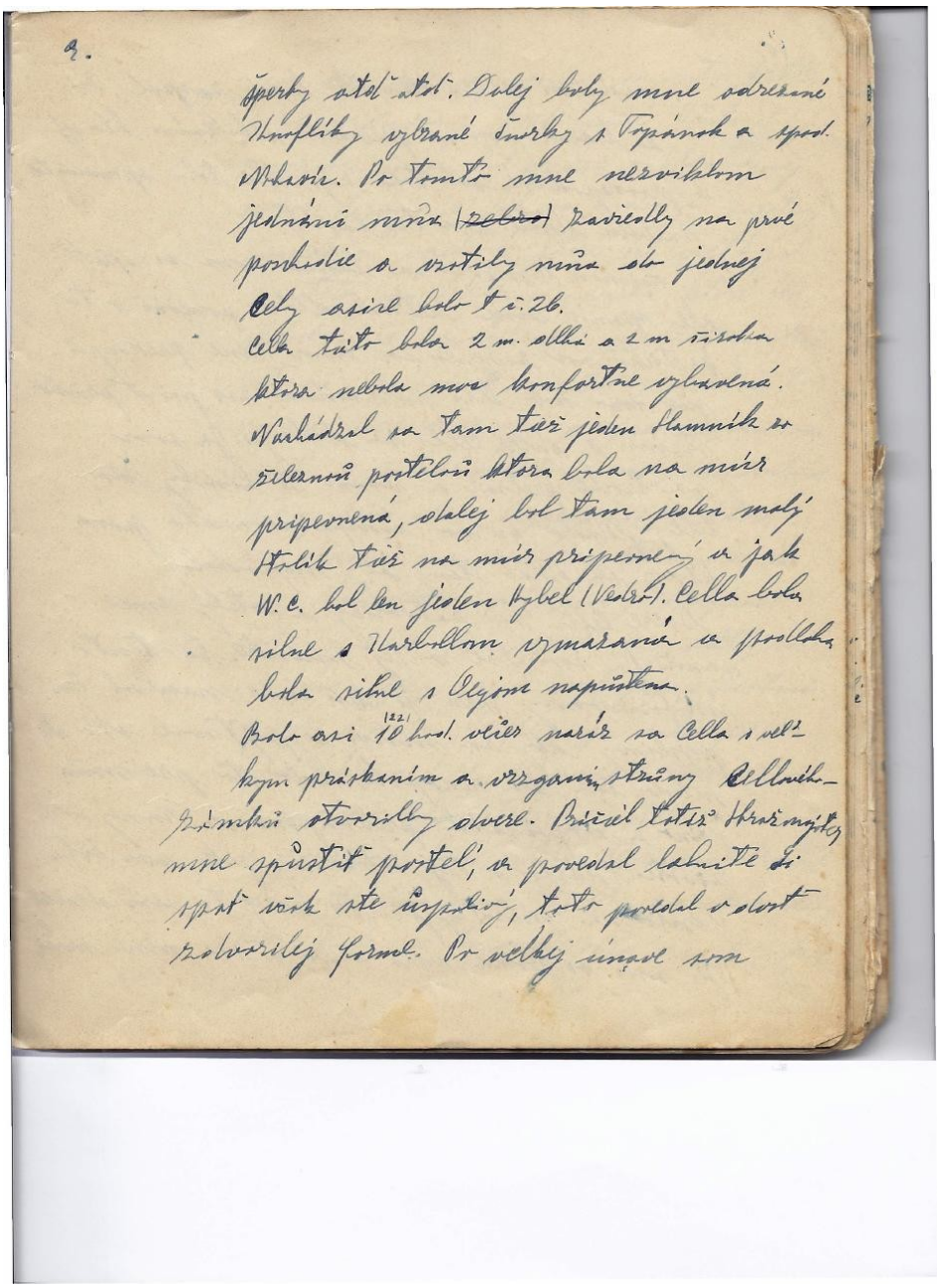
Original manuscript — page 7



Moja mladšia sestrenica sa preskočení s veľkým plačom. Hneď mňa spoznala keď Ty sme ešte chvíľu sa ale ja som jej šiť. povedal, že aby nepľakala všetko bude úplne v jasnené a ide prísť sa pozrieť. Ďalej dal som jej rozkaz aby okamžite šla k mojej ženy Ottke a Ty aby Telefonicky alebo Telegraficky mojho m. Otca volala do Viedne, a povedala mu že mu odkazujem aby šiel hneď na Ministerstvo Č.S.R. Tam aby vyhľadal mne osobne dobre známeho p. Constila a poprosil ho aby nám bol nápomocný. Otec to hneď urobila a m. môj Otec šiť na druhý deň bol v Viedni. Po niekoľko minútovom rozhovore s sestranicou oboznámil mňa Tajný a jednota s najväčšiu Vďaku Rakúska t.zv. Rosauerla-nolekasserne - Gefängnis.

Života príbehy vo Väzení

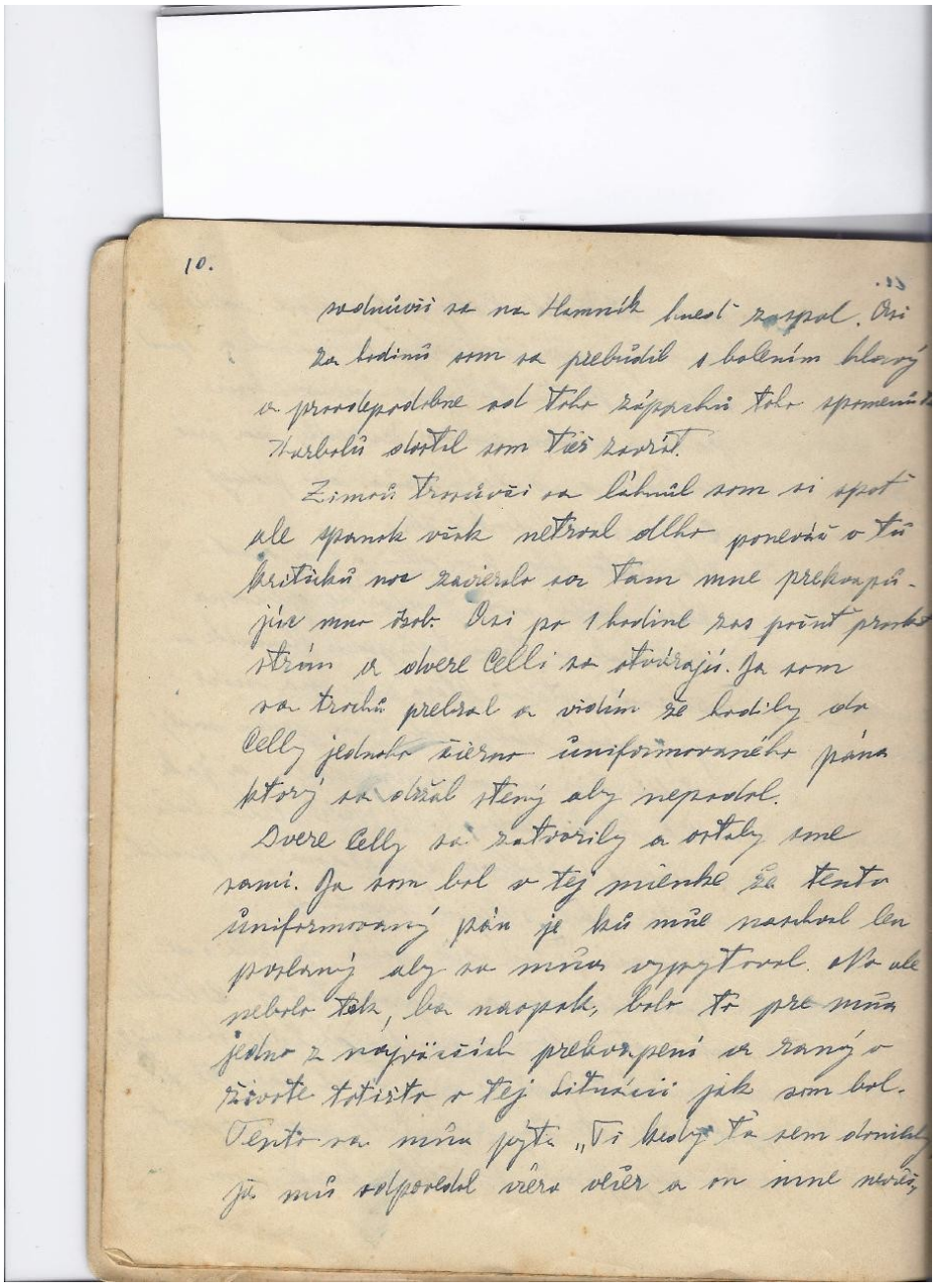
Pri príchode do Väzenia bolo mne v slušnejšej miestnosti oslobodzané všetky moje Dokumenta a ja sa bol prijíde veci Hodinky



9.

špeky atď atď. Ďalej boly mne odrezané
Manfličky vybrané šnurky z Topánok a spod.
Vrchárie. Po tomto mne nezvyklom
jednaní mňa ~~zobrali~~ zaviedly na prvé
poschodie a vrtily mňa do jednej
Cely asiel bolo č. 26.
Cela táto bola 2 m. dlhá a 2 m široka
ktora nebola moc komfortne vyhavená.
Vzadádzal sa tam tiež jeden stanník so
železnou posteľou ktora bola na múr
pripevnená, ďalej bol tam jeden malý
stolík tiež na múr pripevnený a jak
W.C. bol len jeden kybel (vedro). Cella bola
silne s Karbolom vymazaná a podlaha
bola silne s Olejom napustena.
Bolo asi 10[22] hod. večer nakáz na Cella s vel-
kym prískanim a vrzganim strážny Cellovú
Dvierka otvorily dvere. Prišiel tatiž Hrač mojej
mne spustit posteľ, a prevedal kabinet či
spať vôbec ste inspicij, tato prevedal v obvyk
nalvorenej forme. Po velkej únave som

Original manuscript — page 9



10.

.13

neskúšal sa na klamnika lineol rozpal. Asi
za hodinu som sa prebudil s bolením hlavy
a prosto-protivne zo tela zápachu tela spomenú-
tkarbolu ošaftil som viac zavrú.

Zimoš trvalo sa láhnal som si spať
ale spanok vôbec nedával dlho ponevši o tú
hrdličku nie zavierala sa tam mne prekvapi-
júce mno bolo. Asi po 1 hodine zas prišli prosto
stráž a otvorili cely sa skúmajú. Ja som
sa trochu prebral a videl som že hodiny ako
cely jednako čierno uniformovaného pána
ktorý sa obzeral steny aby nepozbral.

Dvere cely sa zatvorily a ostaly sme
sami. Ja som bol v tej mienke že tento
uniformovaný pán je kto mňe navštívil len
pozbrojný aby sa mňou vypytoval ale
nebolo tak, ba naopak, bolo to pre mňa
jedno z najväčších prekvapení za celý
život totiste v tej situácii jaká som bol.
Ozval sa mňou pojte „Ci kolby" ja sem obvinil
jo. mňa odpovedal vôbec a on mne nevšíj

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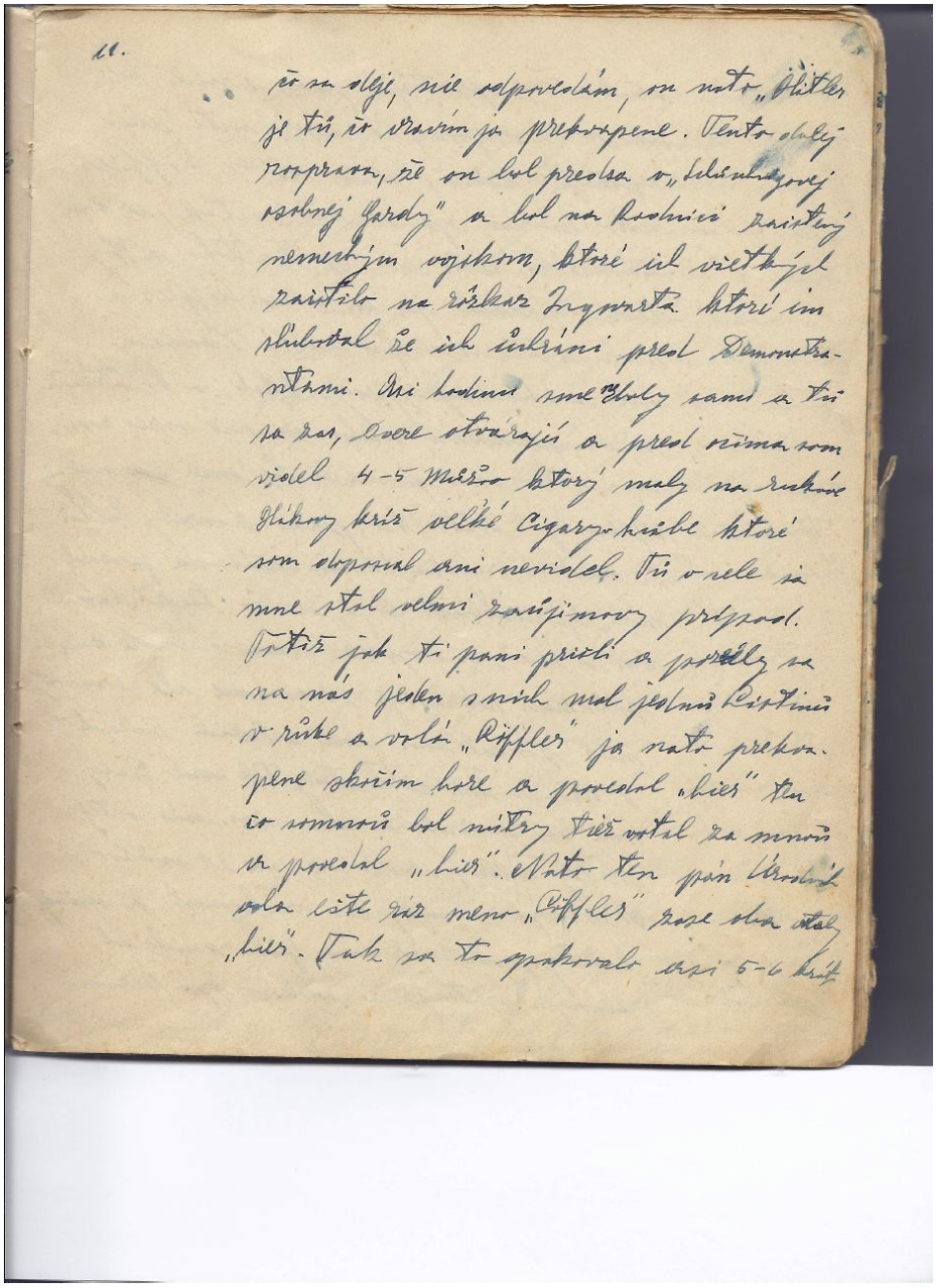

11.

čo na otázku, nič odpovedám, na to „Hitler je tu, ja vám ja prekvapené. Tento obvyklý rozprava, že on bol preložený v „Leibstandarte" a bol na dovolenke zaistený nemeckým vojskom, ktoré išlo vtedy zaistiť na výzkum Jugoslávia. ktorí im sľubovali že ich ľudskými prejdú Demonstrantami. Asi hodinu sme boly sami a tu sa dvere otvárajú a prejde niekoľko vidím 4-5 Mužov ktorý mali na rukáve žlté kríže veľké cigary-hrube ktoré som odporúčal ani nevidel. Tu v tele sa mne stal veľmi zaujímavý prípad. Pretože jeho tí páni prišli a postavili sa na nás jeden z nich mal jednú listinu v ruke a volá „Riffler" ja na to prekvapene skočím hore a povedal „hier" ten čo nemecký bol nižší tiež vstal za mnou a povedal „hier". Na to ten pán kresbu volá ešte raz meno „Riffler" zase sa ozval „hier". Tak sa to opakovalo asi 5-6 krát

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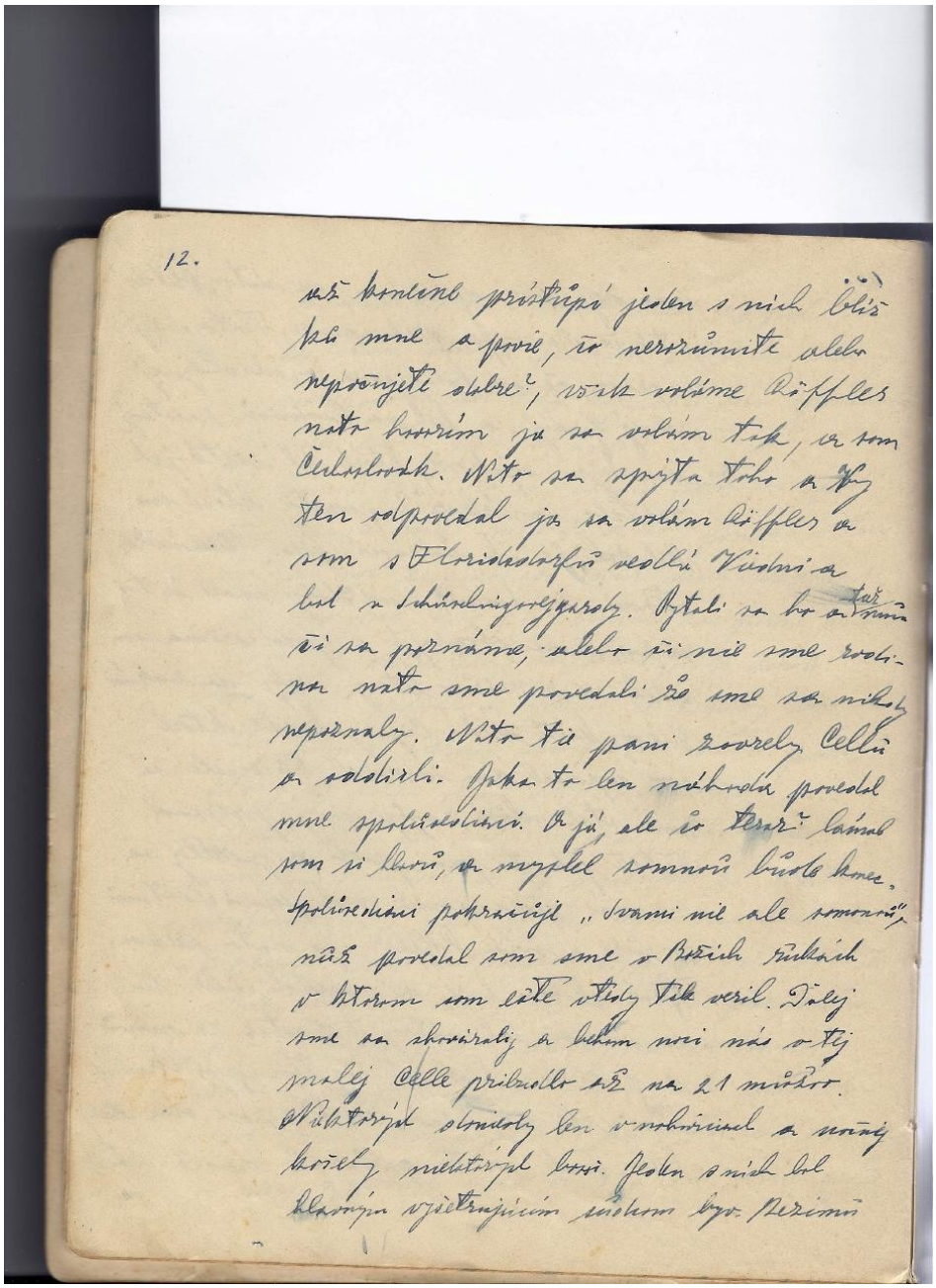

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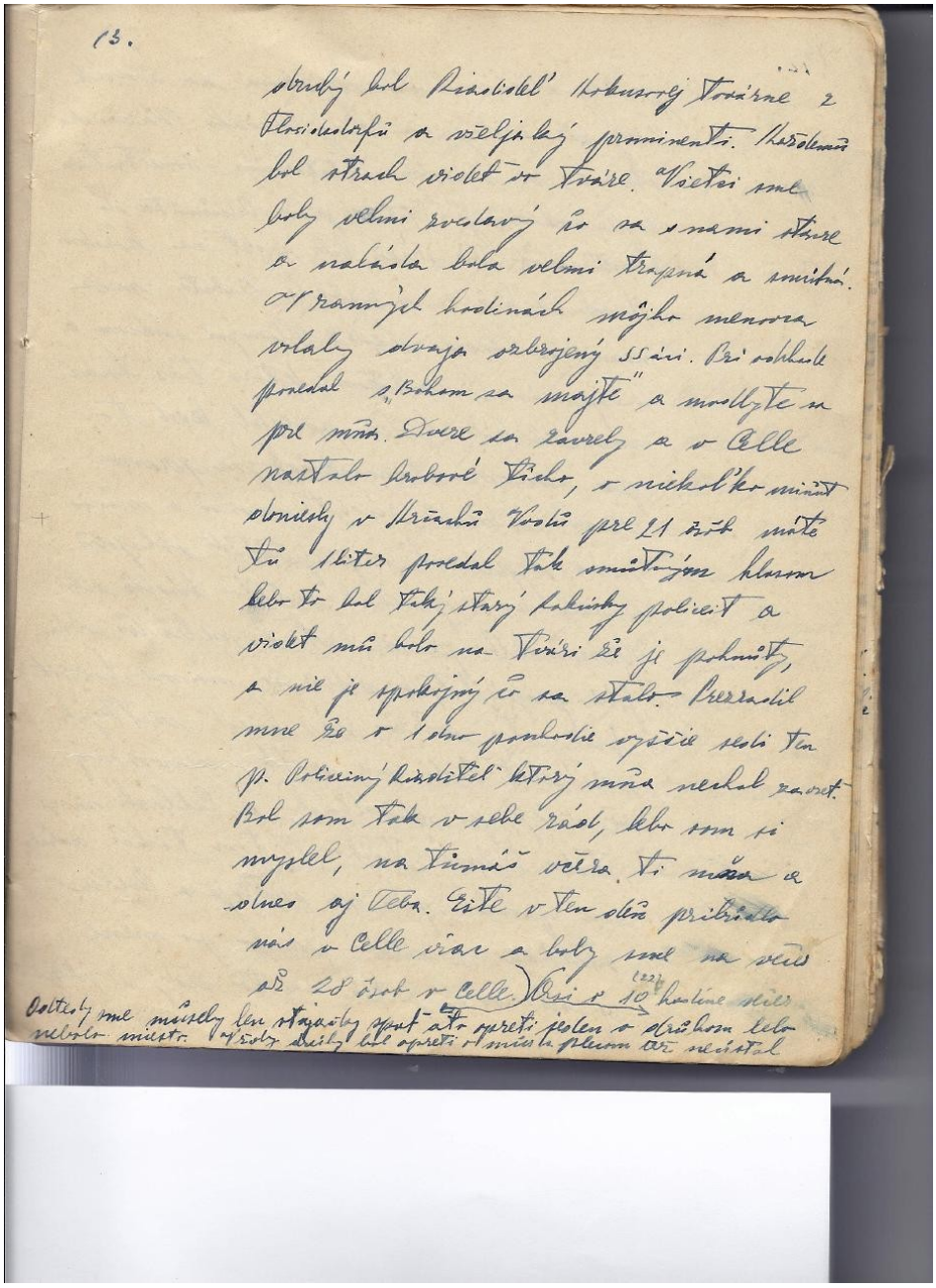

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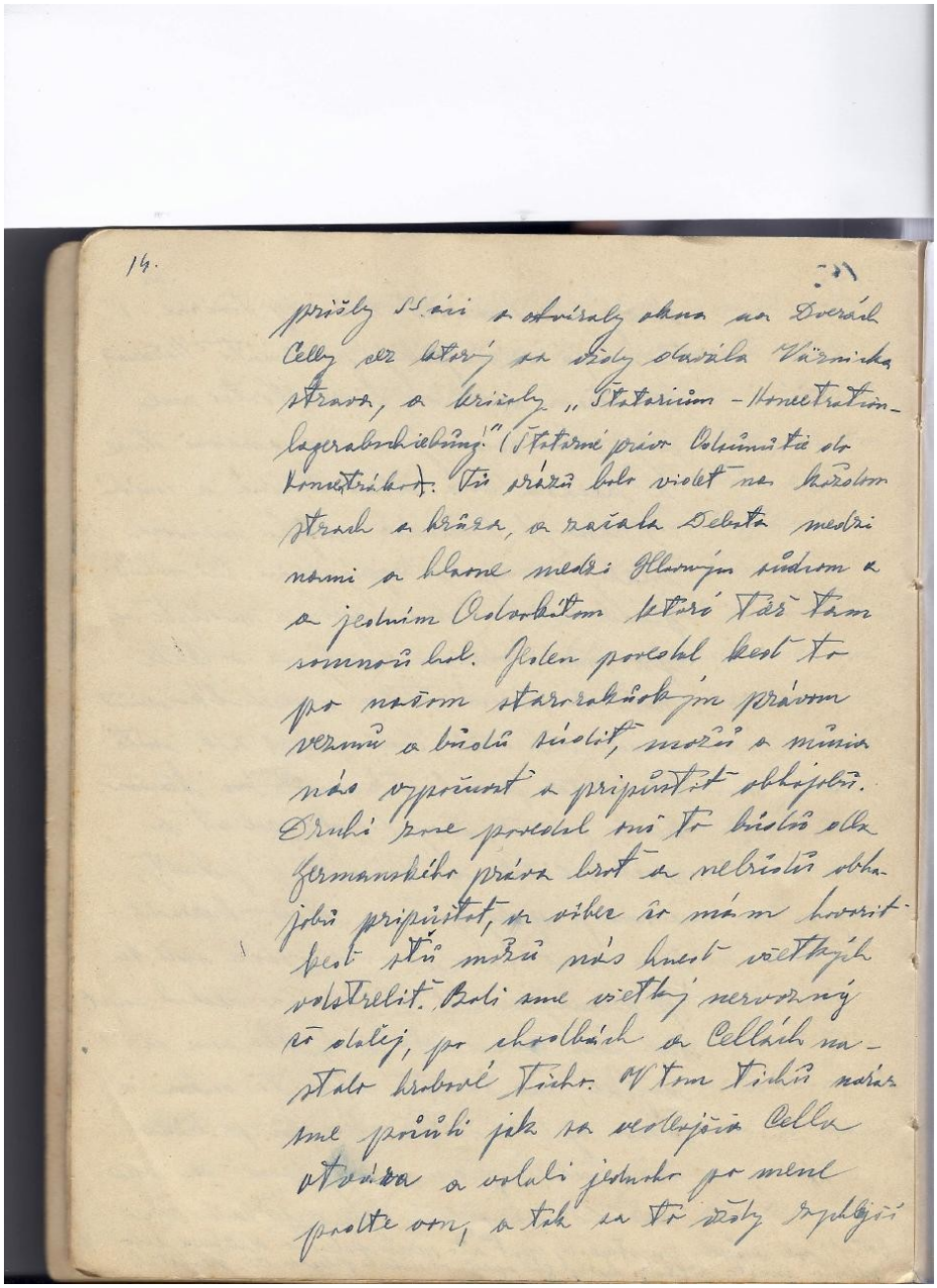

14.

prišly SS-áci a otvárajú okno na dverách
cely, cez ktorý sa dáva každému väzňovi
strava, a kričia: „Stehaufen - Konzentrations-
lagerabschiebung!" (Stehaufen prísl. Odsúdiť do
koncentrákov). Tú prázdnu bolo vidieť na chodbe
strach a hrôzu, a začala debata medzi
nami o hlavne medzi Hlavným súdom a
o jestvom Oslobodení, ktoré Vás tam
samotných bol. Jeden povedal, keď to
po našom stavovskom práve
vezmú a bitolú viesť, možú a môžu
nás vypočuvať a pripúšťať obhajobu.
Druhý zase povedal, že to bitolú ako
germanského práva bez a nebitolú obha-
jobu pripúšťať, a viac sa nám hovoriť
nedá, že nás hneď väzňajú
odstrelia. Bolo zase viac nervózny
ako doteď, po chodbách a celách na-
stalo hrobové ticho. V tom tichu nára-
zy prišli jako sa vedľajšia cela
otvára a volali jedného po mene
prostredníctvom a tak sa to deje vyhlásiť

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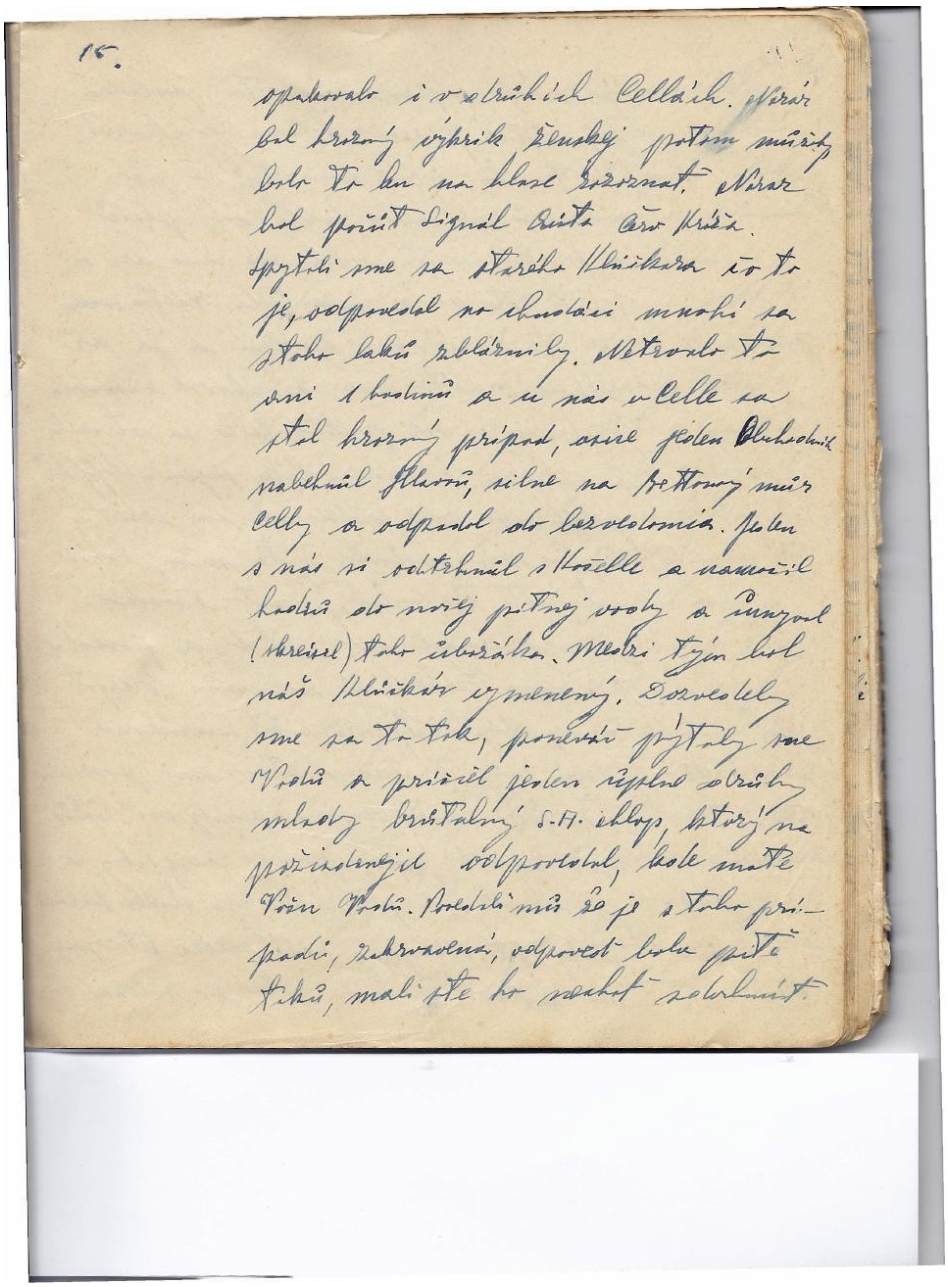

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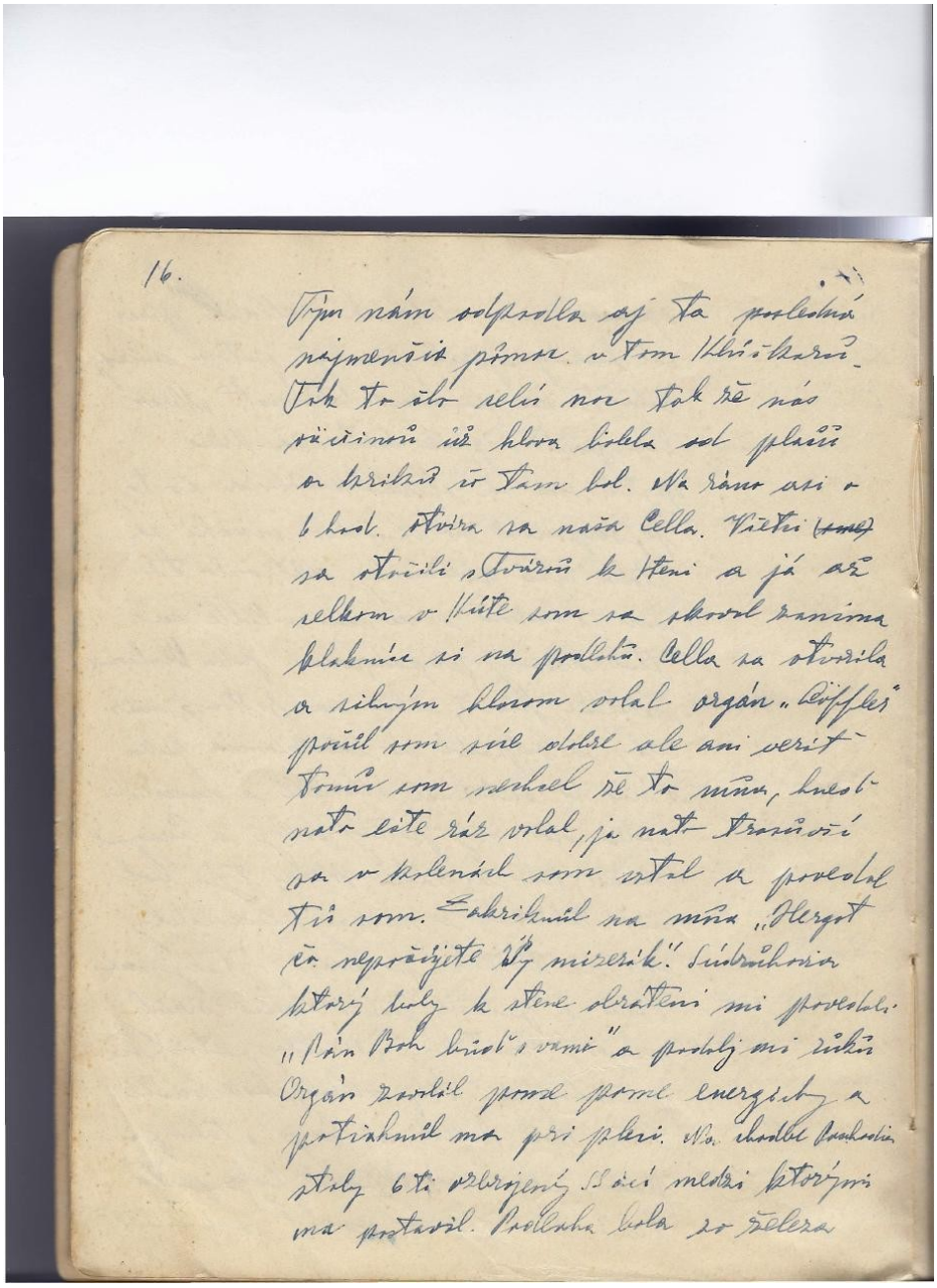

16.

Vojna nám odpustila aj ťa posledná najmenšiu pôsnosť v tom kľúčovaní. Tak ťa ako relú nos ťak že nás väčinou už hlava bolela sol plašů a krikaň ti tam bol. Na ráno asi o 6 hod. otvára sa naša cella. Vietri ~~sme~~ sa otvorili „Tvúrci k Hani a já až velkom v kúte som sa skoval ranima blakmice si na podlahu. Cella sa otvorila a silnym hlasom volal orgán „Löffler" pozrel som sice okolie ale ani veriť ťomu som nechcel že ťa mňa, hneď nato ešte ráz volal, ja nato strašnosť sa v kolenách som strhol a povolal ťiš som. Zakričal na mňa „Herget ťa nepočujete Vy mizerák." Súdruhovia ktorý boly k stene obrátení mi povedali. „Pán Boh buď s vami" a podobj mi ťiško Orgán zvolal pomoc pomoc energicky a potriasnuť ma pri pleci. Na chodbe dozorcia stoly 6 ti ozbrojený SS ácí medzi ktorými ma postavil. Podlaha bola so ťelezo

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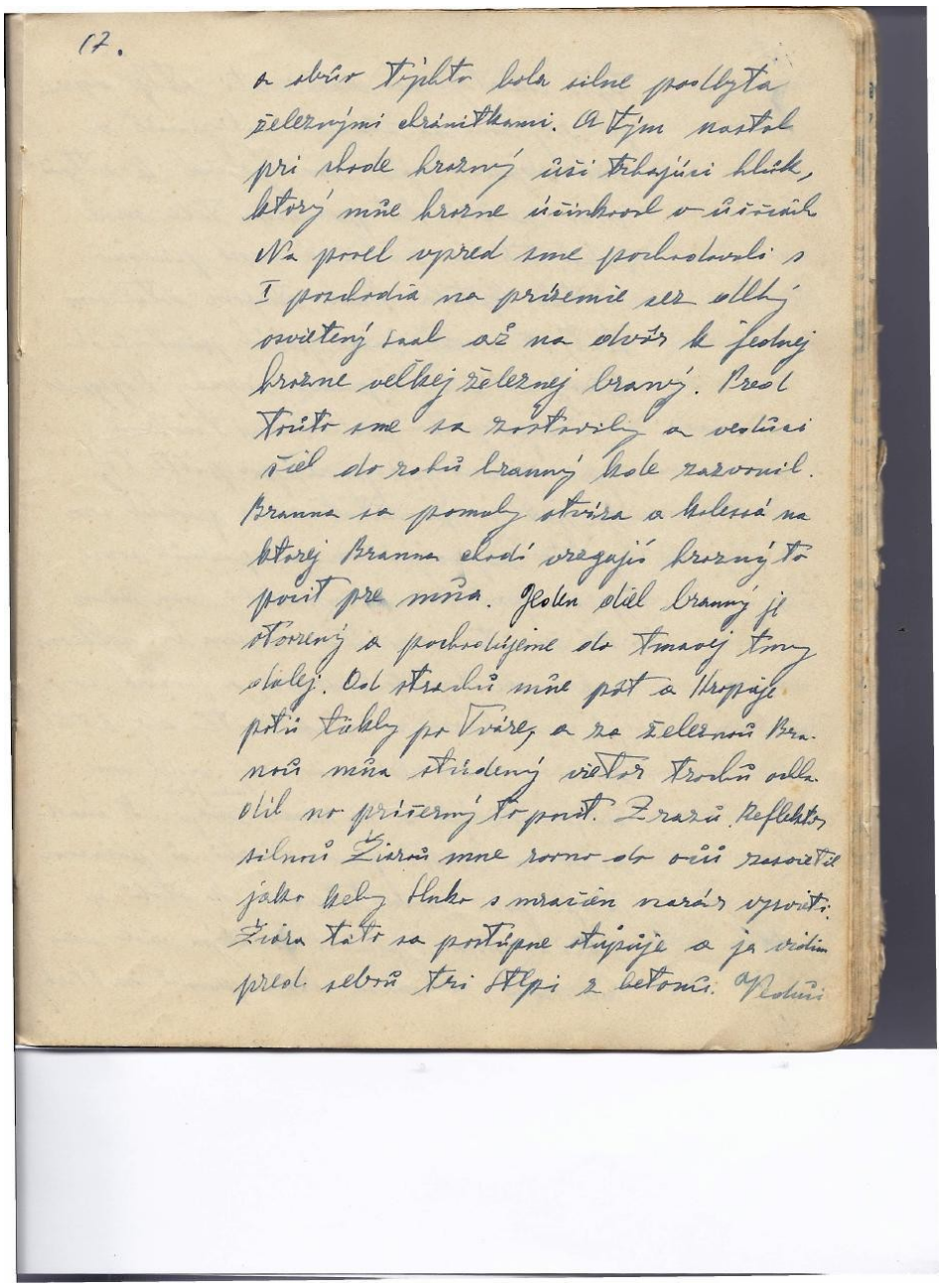
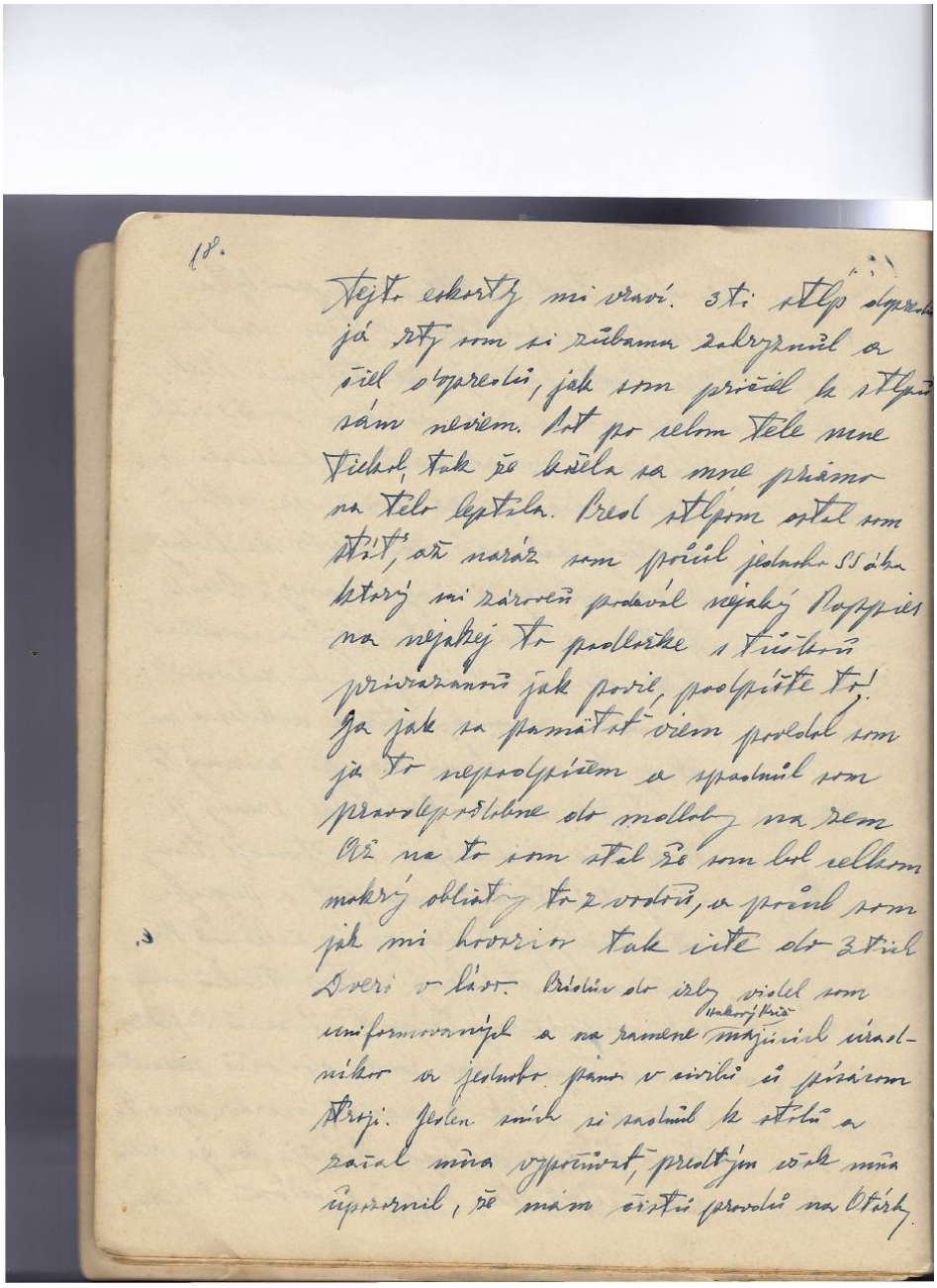


17.

a dvor týchto bola silne posbyta
železnými drátmi. A tým nastal
pri škole hrozný čuš trhajúci hlúk,
ktorý mňa hrozne úzkostlivo v ušiach
Na prvý vpred mne pochodovali s
I pochodia na priemer ešte veľký
osvetlený sál až na oblúk k jednej
hrozne veľkej železnej bráne. Prešol
tento mne sa zastavil a vedúci
šiel do rohu brannej školy zazvonil.
Brana sa pomaly otvára a helená na
ktorej brana skodí vrzajúci hrozný to
povrch pre mňa. Jeden diel brany je
otvorený a pochodujeme do tmavej tmy
chodby. Od stiedu mňa pot a hrozne
prišli tiekly po tvári a na železnú Bra-
nou mňa stredný vietor studom oblia-
dil na priečny to pocit. Zrazu reflektor
silnou žiarou mne rovno do očí zasvietil
jako keby chce s mračien nám vpovedať
Žiara tá sa postupne stupňuje a ja vidím
pred sebou tri stĺpy z betonu. Na nich



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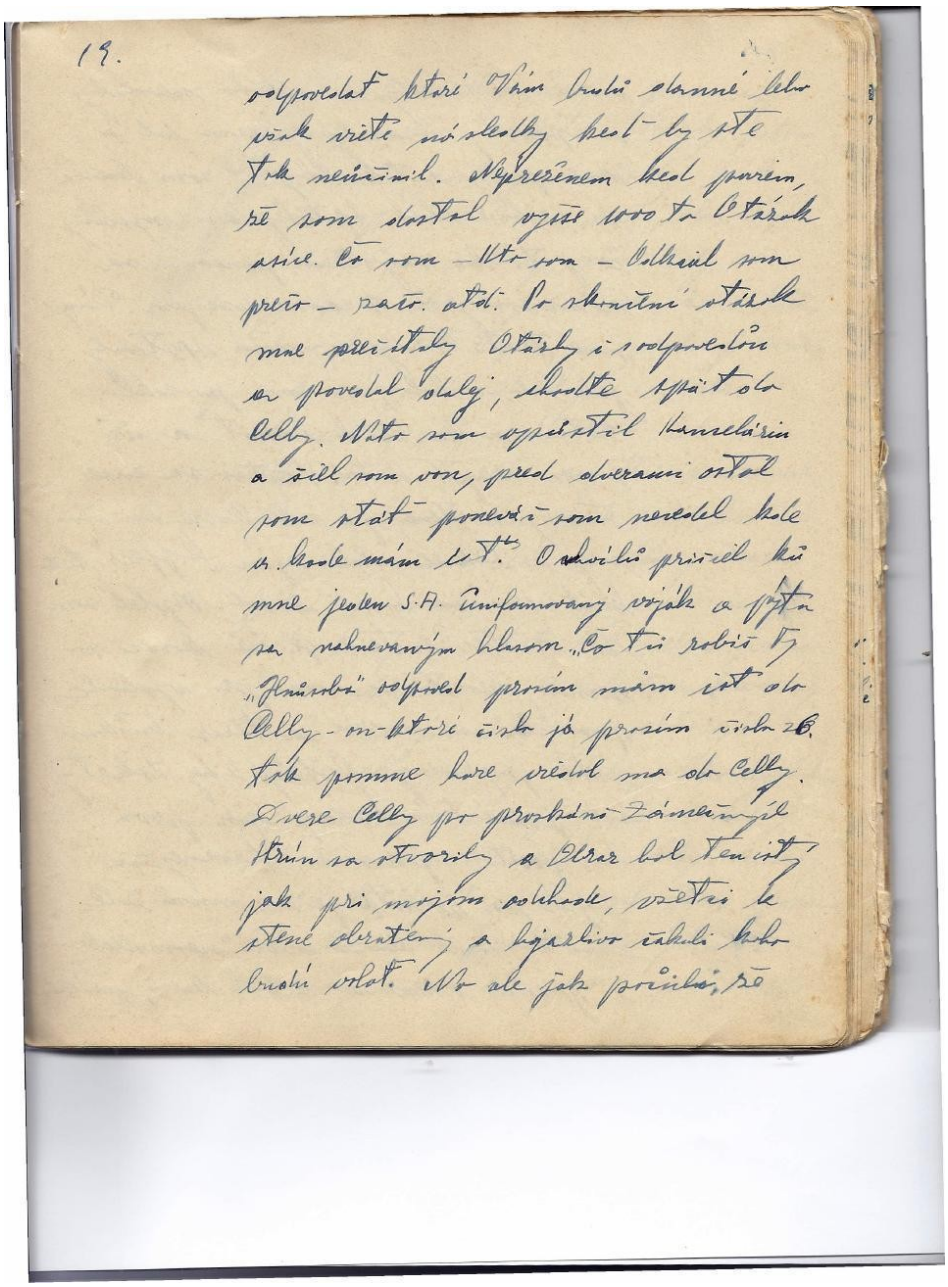

19.

odpovedať ktorí Vám budú otázky
vždy vrieť nevedeli by ste
Vám nevšimol. Najprezentnejší prvý,
že som odstal vyše roka Otázky
ako. Čo som – Kto som – Odkiaľ som
prišiel – prečo. atď. Po skončení otázok
mne prečítali Otázky a odpovede
na povolaní, ktoré vypísať do
celly. Keď som vypísal kancelária
a čítal som ich, pred otvorením dverí
som stál pomerne som nevedel kde
a kde mám ísť. Odvolil prišiel ku
mne jeden S.A. uniformovaný vojak a pýta
sa nahnevaným hlasom „Čo tu robíš by
„Glaubst" odpovedal prvým mám ísť do
Celly – no ktorej číslo je prvým číslo 26.
Keď prišiel ma do Celly.
Dvere Celly po prvýkrát zaznelo
Kľúč sa otvorily a Oskar bol ten istý,
jak pri mojom odchode, vrátil sa
stene dverami a hajadlivo čakali kedy
budú vojsť. Ale jak povedal, že

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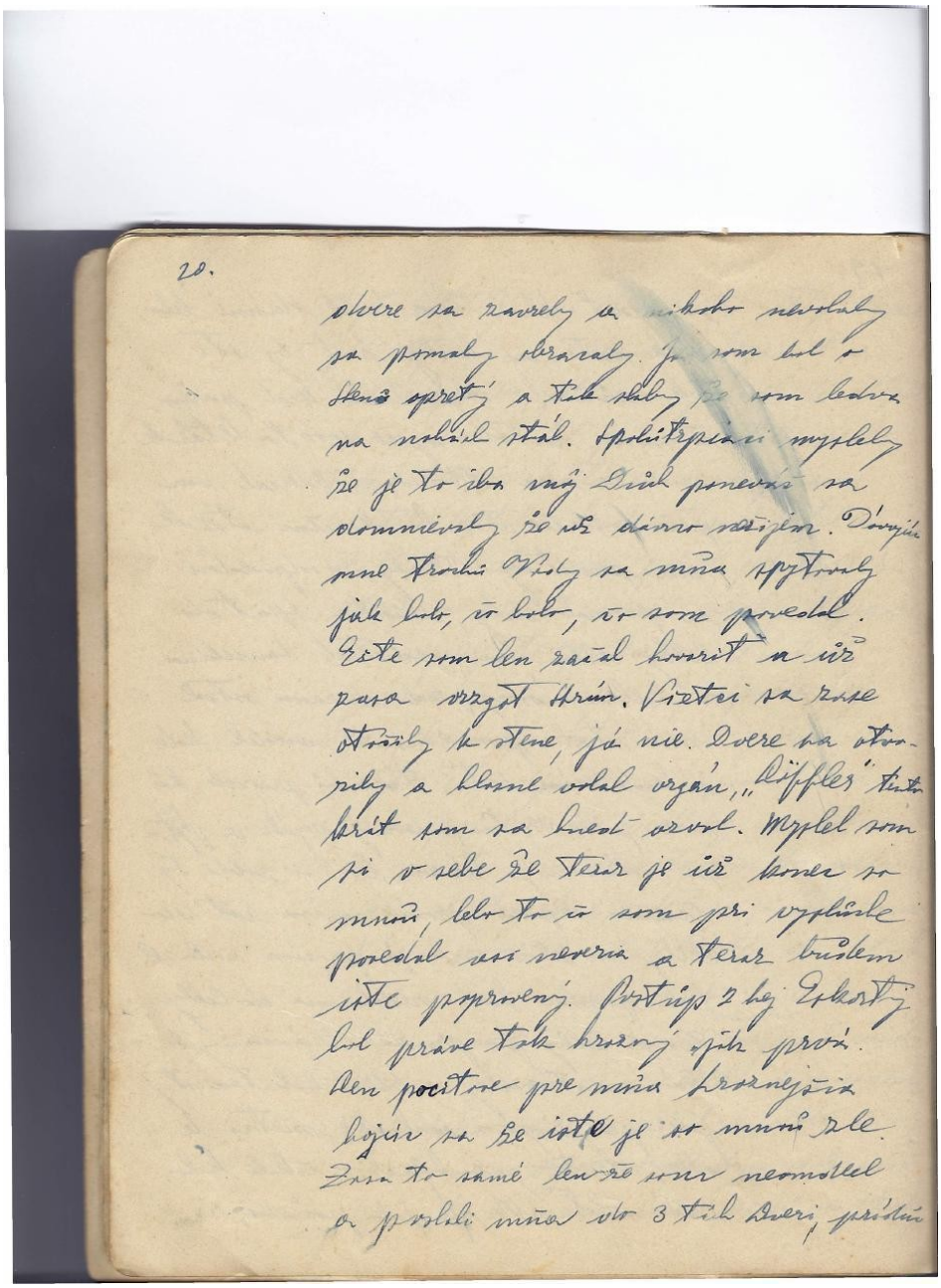

20.

dvere sa zavreli a nikoho nevolali
sa pomaly vzdialil. Ja som bol v
tejto spreži a tak tuhý že som ledva
na nohách stál. Spolucestujúci myslel
že je to iba môj čudák ponevráz sa
domnieval že už dávno vyšiel. Dávajú
mne krvavé handry sa mňa upätrali
jako bolo, čo bolo, čo som povedal.
Ešte som len začal hovoriť a už
pred vrzgot hrdla. Vietor sa zase
dral k tebe, já nie. Dvere sa otvo-
rily a hlasné volal vrzgot „Öffnen" Tu-
bral som sa hneď von. Myslel som
si v sebe že teraz je už koniec so
mnou, lebo to čo som pri vyplúšte
povedal ani neverím a teraz trúsim
ešte poprvnej. Postúpil som hej Eskorty
bol práve tak hrozný ako prvý.
Len pocitovo pre mňa hroznejší
bojím sa že ešte je to mnú zle.
Zase to samé len že sme neomylom
a povolili mňa vlo 3 tak dveri, prídu

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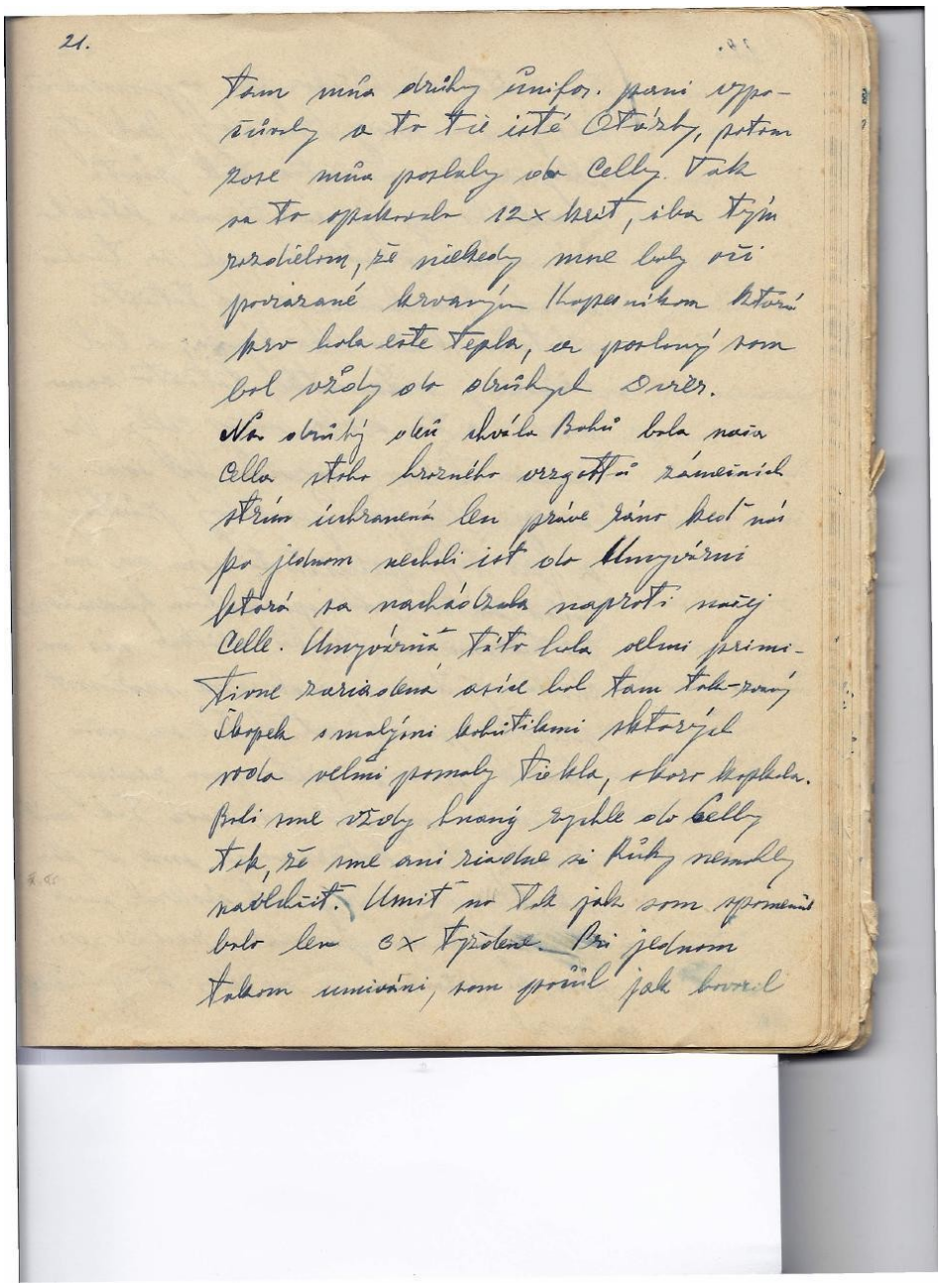
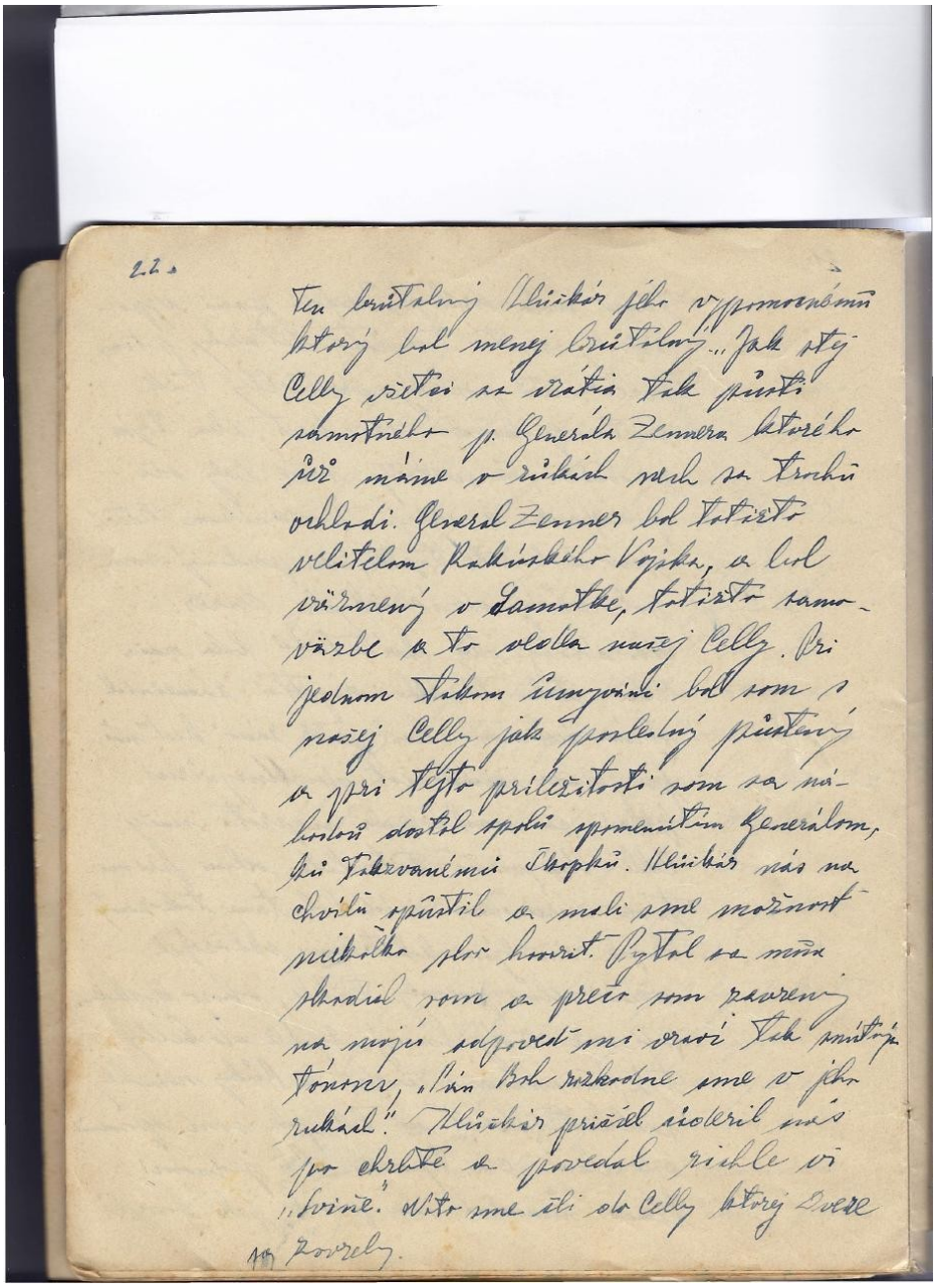


21.

Tam mňa druhý únifor. pani vypo-
žičaly a to tie isté čižmy, potom
zase mňa posadly do cely. Tak
sa to opakovalo 12x kvôli, iba tým
rozdielom, že niekedy mne boly vrá
povrávané chrvavým handrami ktorú
prv bola ešte tepla, a poslednýkrát
bol vôbec do obrúbych dverí.
Na obrúbej ploči chodby bolo naša
cella ktoho hrozného vrzgotia zámenných
strún ochranená len práve jano kedy nás
po jednom vedú isť do Umyvárni
ktorá sa nachádzala naproti našej
celle. Umyváreň táto bola celkom primi-
tívne zariadená a síce bol tam tak-zvaný
žľabek s malými kohútikami ktorých
voda veľmi pomaly tiekla, a ktorá kvapkala.
Boli sme vždy hnaný zpäkle do cely
tak, že sme ani riadne si ruky nemohly
nadlúčiť. Umiť sa tak jako som spomenul
bolo len 6x týždenne. Pri jednom
takom umivaní, som spôsil jak bravec



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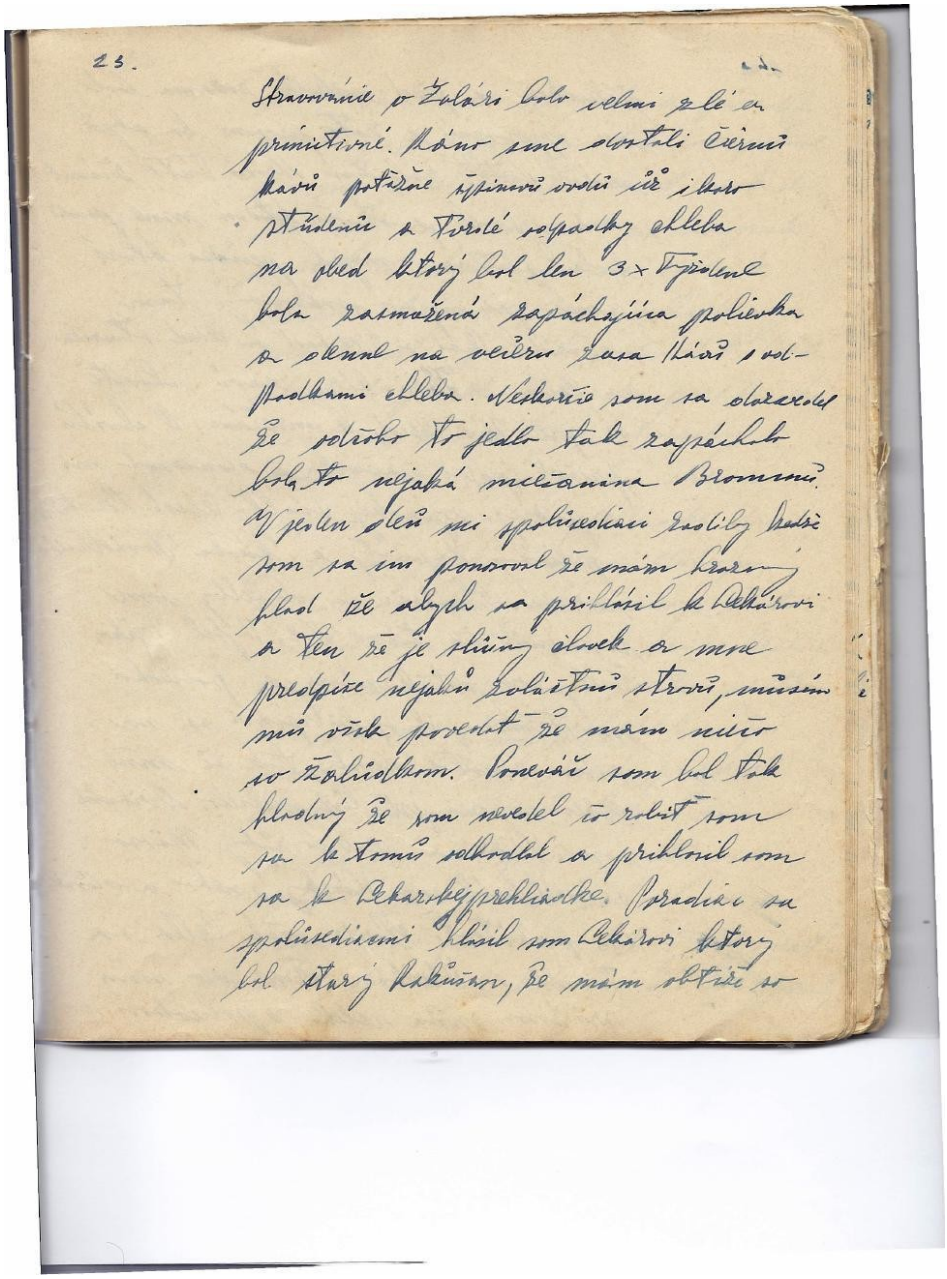

23.

Stravovanie v Žalári bolo veľmi zlé a
primitívne. Ráno nás obdarili čiernou
kávou potrebnú týždňovú dávku čaju a chleba
na obed ktorý bol len 3x týždenne
bola zasmažená zapáchajúca polievka
a okrem na večeru časť kúsok a pol-
dvadsiatku chleba. Večerám som sa ohradoval
že polievka to jedlo tak zapáchalo
bolo to nejaká mieszanina Brommu.
Z jedla mi spolucestujúci Židia hádzali
som sa im ponosoval že mám hnačku
hlad že abych sa priblížil k lekárovi
a ten že je služný človek a mne
predpíše nejaký kúsok stravy, mučím
mu vôbec povedať že mám niečo
so žalúdkom. Ponevádž som bol tak
hladný že som nevedel čo robiť som
sa ku stromu odhodlal a priblížil som
sa ku lekárskej prehliadke. Pozadia sa
spolucestujúci hlásil som lekárovi ktorý
bol starý Rakúšan, že mám obtiaže so

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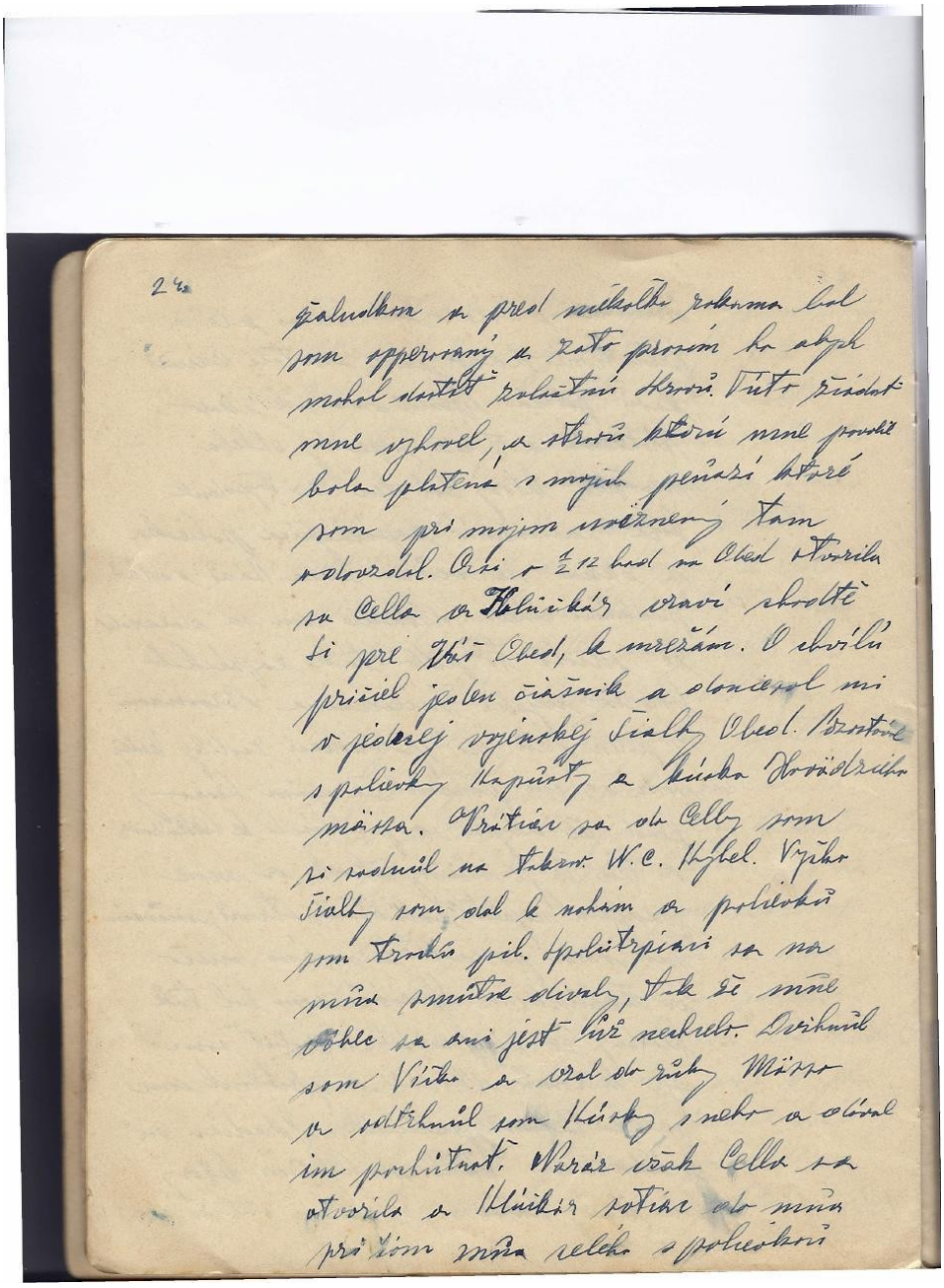

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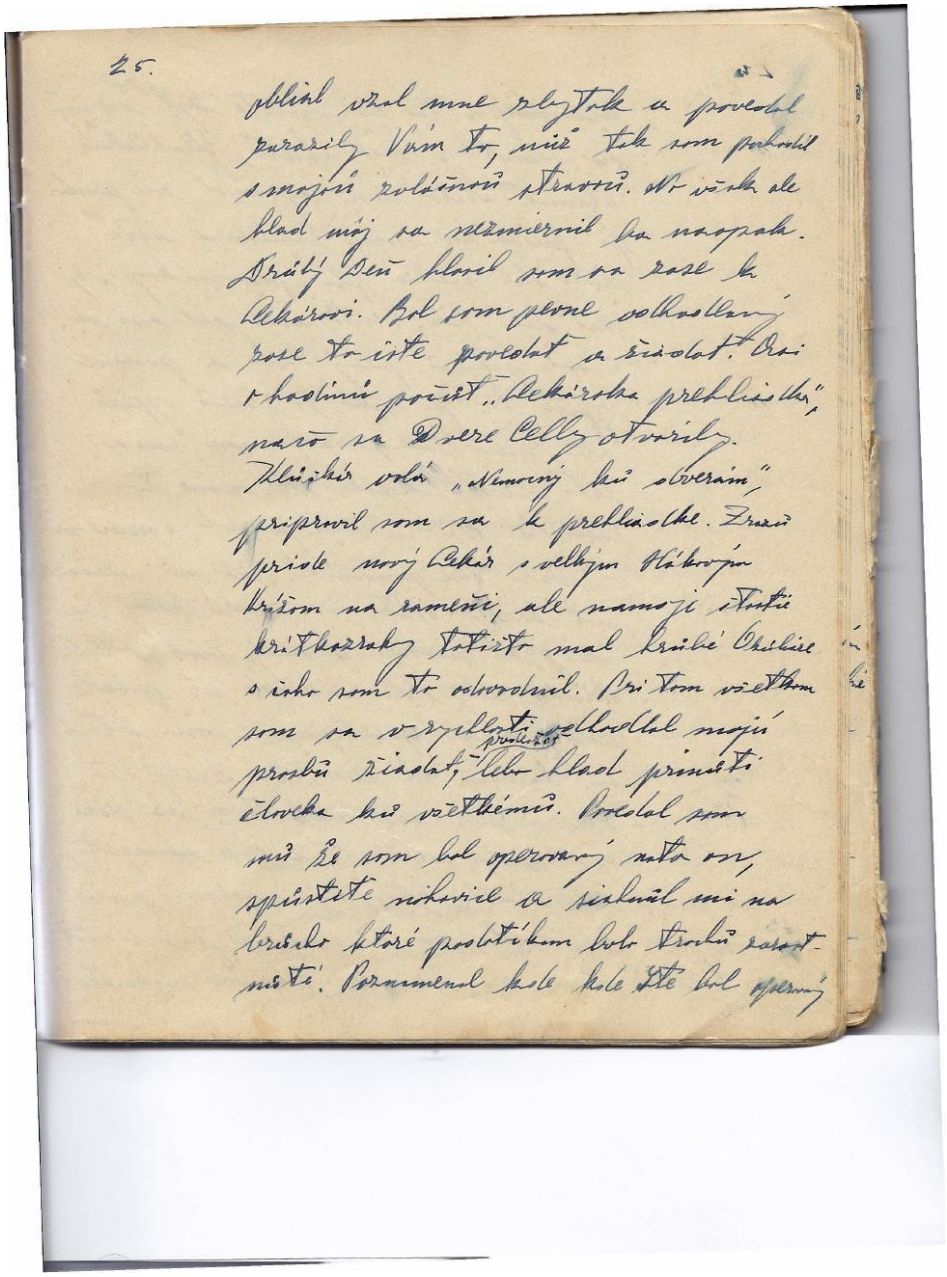

25.

sľúbil vraj mne pľuťka a povolal
pozrieť. Vám to, môj tuka som pokrútil
s mojou zvláštnou ťažkosťou. Ale vôňa ale
hlad môj sa zámerne do naopak.
Druhý deň hlásil som sa zase k
lekárovi. Bol som pevne odhodlaný
zase to ešte povolať a žiadať. Dosi
s hasinou pôjsť „lekárske prehliadky"
nato sa dvere celly otvorily.
Klúčik volá „Nemocný ku ošetreniu"
pripravil som sa k prehliadke. Dnes
príde nový lekár s veľkým lekárskym
kuforom na ramene, ale namiesto ťažkého
kríž kozáka ťažiteľ mal krátke chlapíka
s ktorým som to odvodnil. Pri tom všetkom
som sa v zpelosti odhodlal moju
prosbu žiadať, lebo hlad prinútil
človeka ku všetkému. Povolal som
mú že som bol operovaný nato mi
spôsobil nikovicel a sadnúť mi na
lehátko ktoré pozdĺžnom bolo stroku zaostr-
nuté. Pozrimeral kole kole ďalej bol operný

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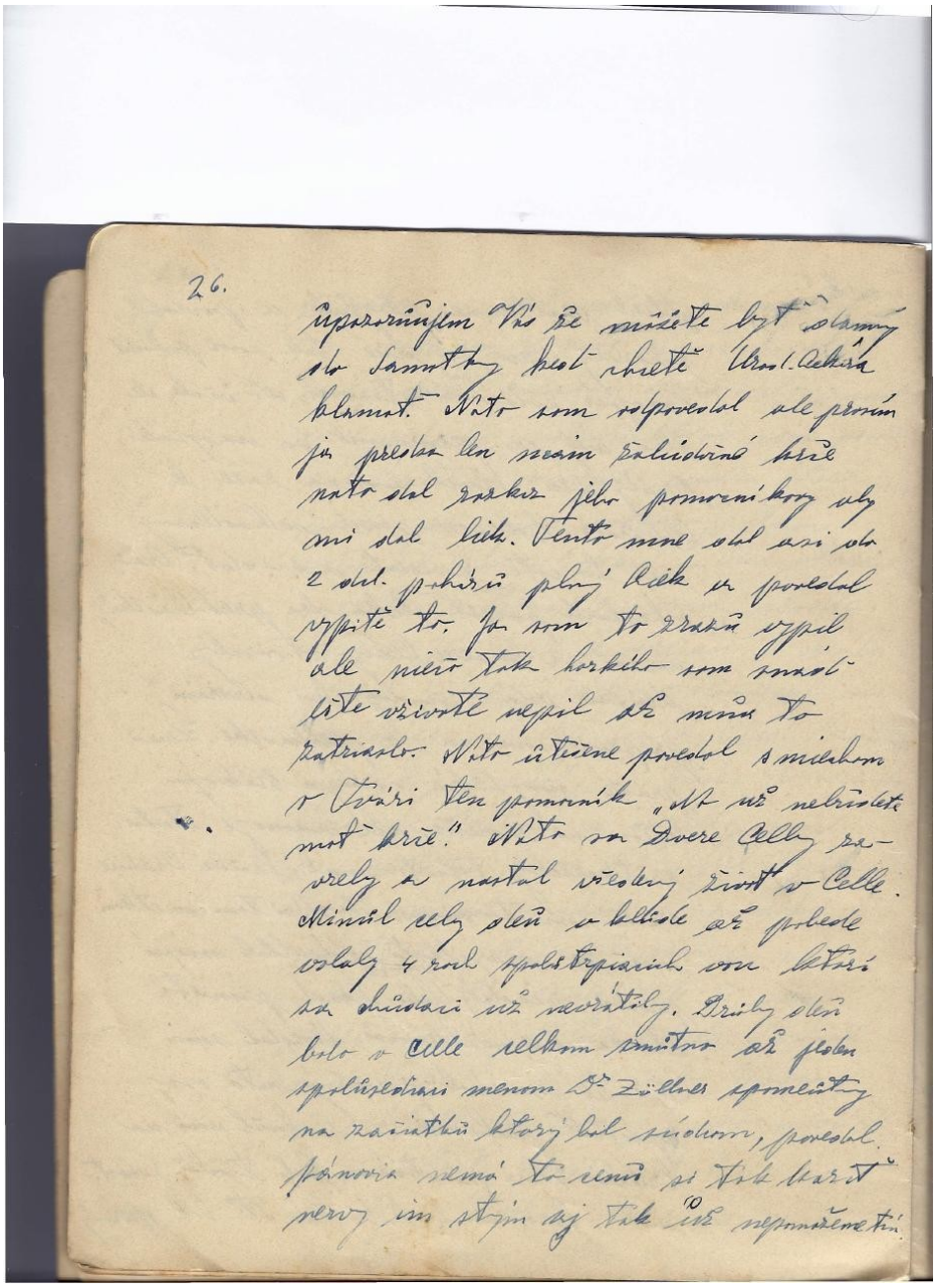

26.

Upozorňujem Vás že môžete byť obvinený
do samoty keď chcete Ukrad. deku
kabanat. Niečo som odpovedal ale prečo
je preslan len neviem žalúdkové bolesti
mňa dal znakov jeho pomocníkov aby
mi dal liek. Večer mne dal asi ako
2 dkl. práškov plný deka a povedal
vypiť to. Ja som to zrazu vypil
ale niečo takého horkého som snáď
ešte vôbec nepil až mňa to
zatriaslo. Niečo ústne povedal s miešnom
v Čiari ten pomocník „ak už nebudeš
mať bolesti." Niečo na dvere celly za-
vrely a nastal väčší život v Celle.
Minúl celý deň a bolesti až pokiaľ
asi 4 ráno spolutrpiacich von bitúr
sa chúdatí už nevrátily. Druhý deň
bolo v celle celkom smutno až jeden
spolužiačkari menom Dr. Zöllner spomínaný
na zaniatku ktorý bol štúdovaný, povedal
pánovia nemá to cenu ja Vám dnes
povedz im niečo aj tak už nepomôžeme.

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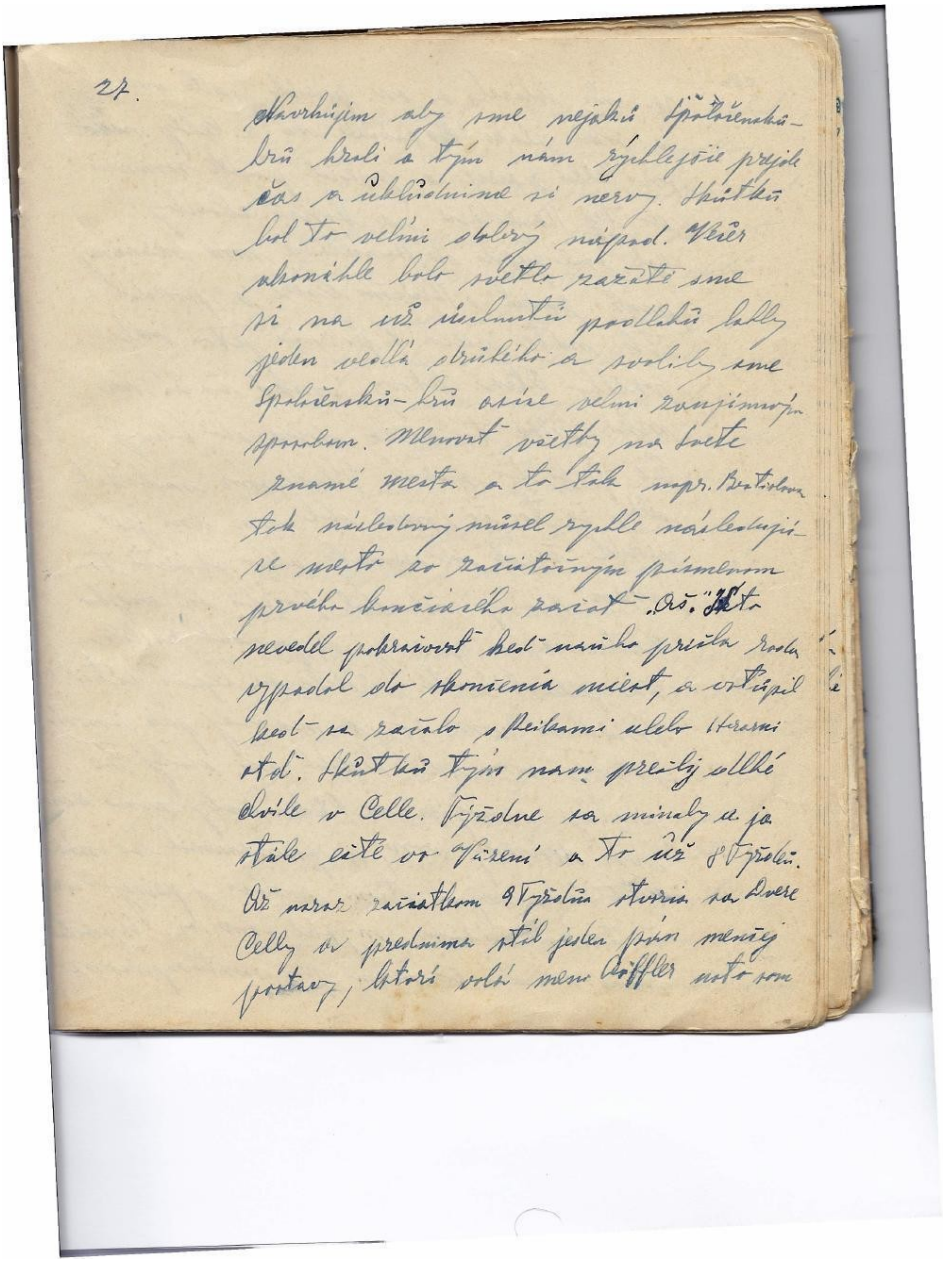

27.

Navrhujem aby sme nejakú spoločenskú hru hrali a tým nám zýdlejšie prejde čas a odpočinieme si nervy. Skutočne bol to veľmi obdivný nápad. Večer okamihle bolo svetlo zažaté sme si na ňú usadnutí pozdĺžnych lavíc jeden vedľa druhého a spomínali sme spoločenských hrú ozaje veľmi zaujímavým spôsobom. Menovať všetky na tomto známe miesta a to ťažko napr. Bratislavu ťažko nájdeme niekoľ vyšlo nám nasledujúce miesto za začiatočným písmenom prvého konečného začiat. Orš. Ktorý nevedel pokračovať hneď naňho prišla rada vypadol do skončenia niekoľ, a ostúpil hneď na začalo s pleskami alebo hrami atď. Skutočne tým nám prešiel celkom dobre v Celle. Vôbec sa minuly u ja stále ešte vo väzení a to už 8 týždňov. Až nám začiatkom 9 týždňa otvorili na dvere Celly vo predmiestí stál jeden pán menší postavy, ktorý volá mene Löffler noto nom

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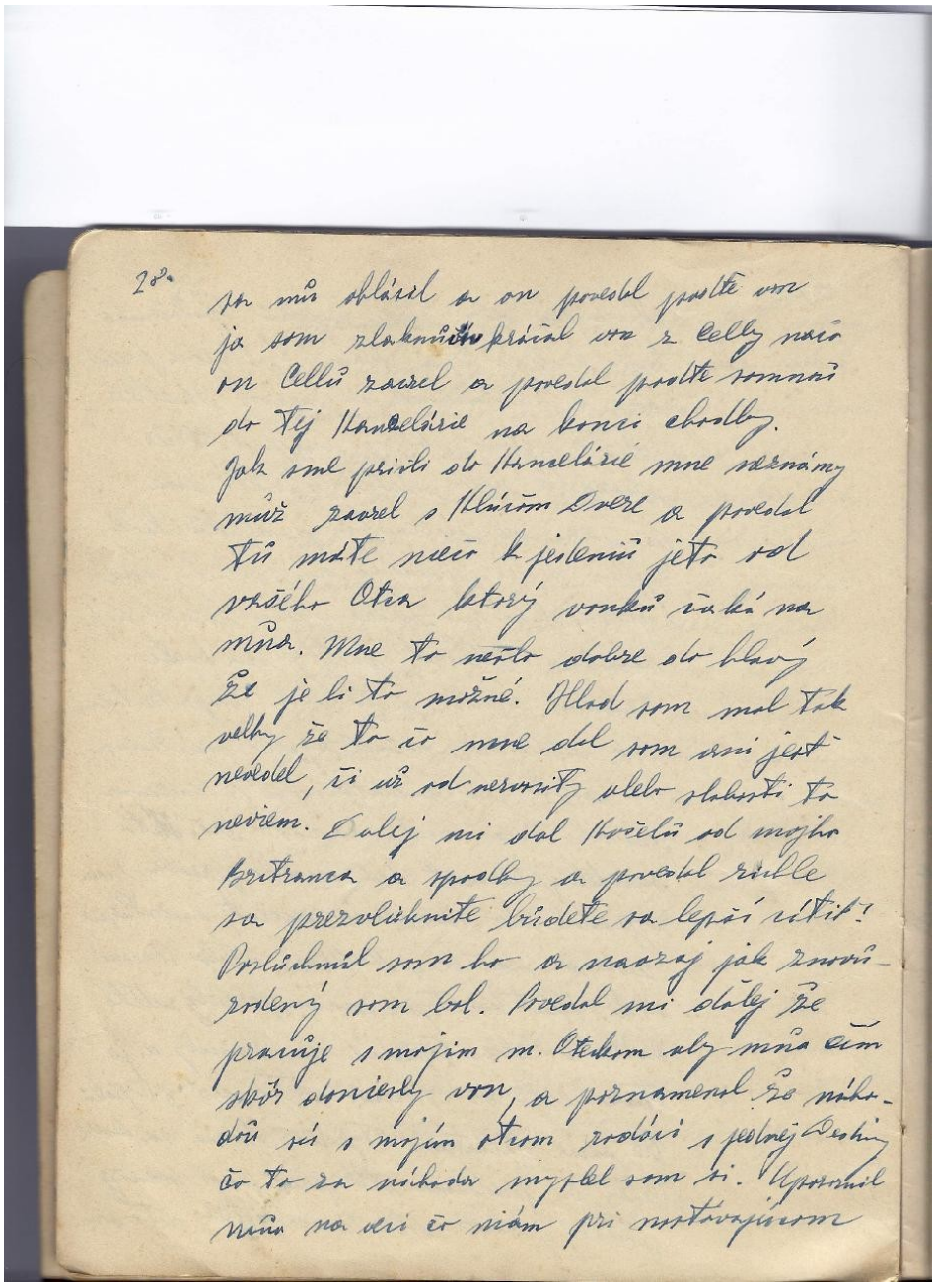

28.

za mňa oblúkol a on povedal potom von
ja som zlakmúčto prišiel von z celly naša
on celli zavrel a povedal potom tomuto
ale Tej Handelsiriel na konci chodby.
Jak sme prišli ale Handelsiriel mne nemeckí
muž zavrel s kľúčom dverl a povedal
Tú máte niečo k jedeniu ješte vol
vrátiť Otca ktorý vonku čaká na
mňa. Mne to nešlo dobre ale hlavný
že je li to možné. Hlad som mal tak
velky že to čo mne dal som ani ješte
nedokel, ti už vol nervozity ulelo vlastní to
nevidem. Dalej mi dal kúsok vol mojho
brutanca a spratky a povedal rúlle
na prezvlúknite bielelte na lepší vrátit!
Prikývol som ho a nazaj jak zmrtvo-
vstalený som bol. Povedal mi dalej že
pracuje s mojim m. Otcom ale mňa ešte
skôr oloviedly von a pozmamenal že náho-
dou ti s mojim otcom pracuji s jednej dielne
čo to za niekoho myslel som ti. Vyprosil
mňa na ti čo niám pri montovaniu

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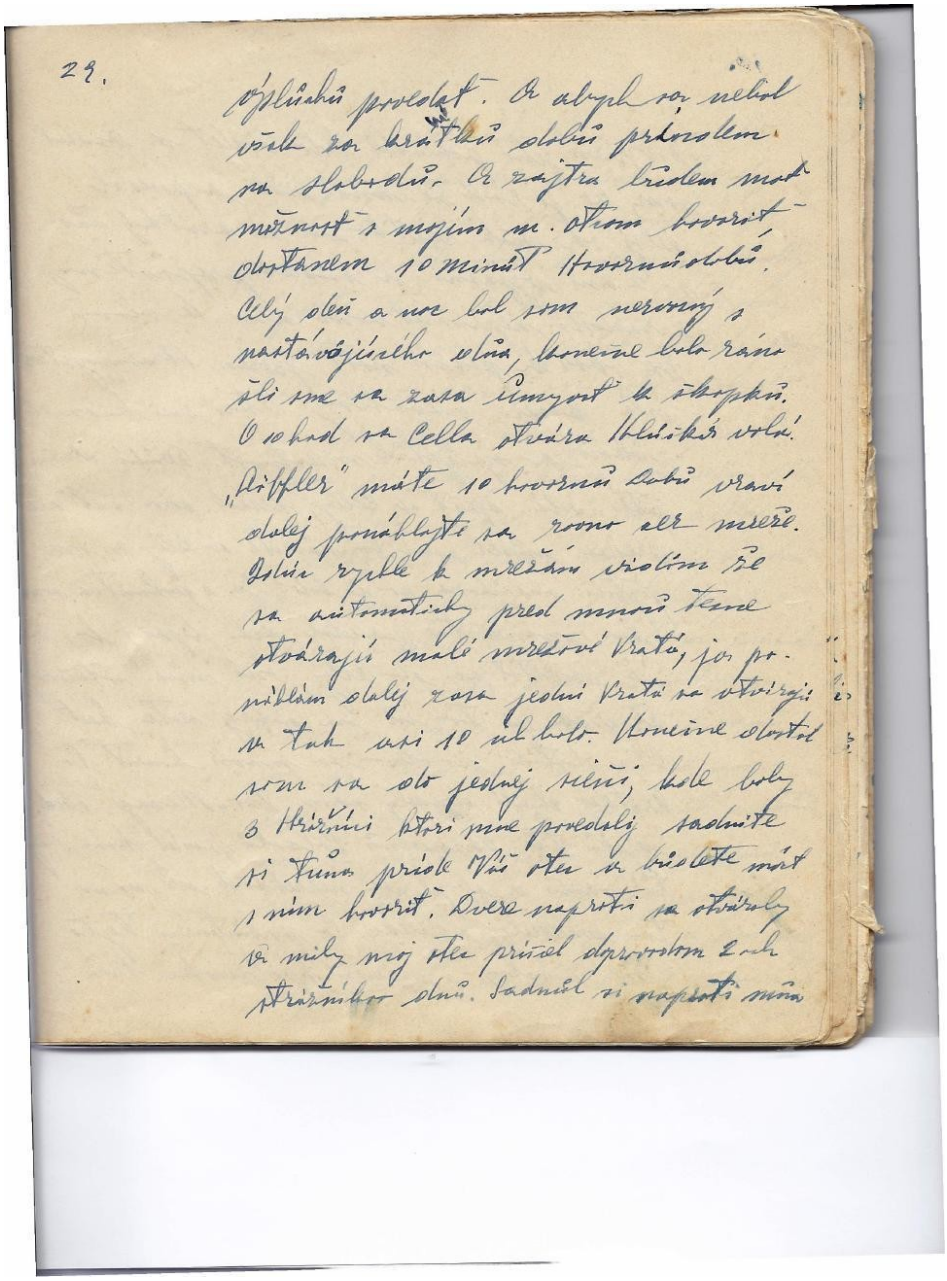

29.

výsluhách povedať. Ak ubehli nejaké
dni za krátkej obdivu problémov
na slobodu. Ak zajtra budem mať
možnosť s mojimi sa. otcom hovoriť
obvolaním 10 minút Hovorná obdivu.
Celý deň a noc bol som nervózny s
nastávajúceho dňa, keďže bolo ráno
šli sme na zasa čakať k čakajúcim.
O osmej sa Cella dvéra hlučne otvorí.
„Diffler" máte 10 hovorných dobu vraví
dalej pomáhajte sa rýchlo ale mierne.
Dalšia rýchle k mrežám vidím že
sa automaticky pred mnou tiež
otvárajú malé mrežové vrátka, jak pri-
nášam dalej zasa jedni vrátka sa otvárajú
a tak asi 10 ak bolo. Konečne dostal
som sa do jednej siene, bolo tuby
s Hrúzmi ktorí mne povedali sadnite
si tuna príde Váš otec a budete mať
s ním hovoriť. Dvere naproti sa otvárali
a môj môj otec prišiel dovnútra. Ach
strašného dňa. Sadnúc si naproti mňa

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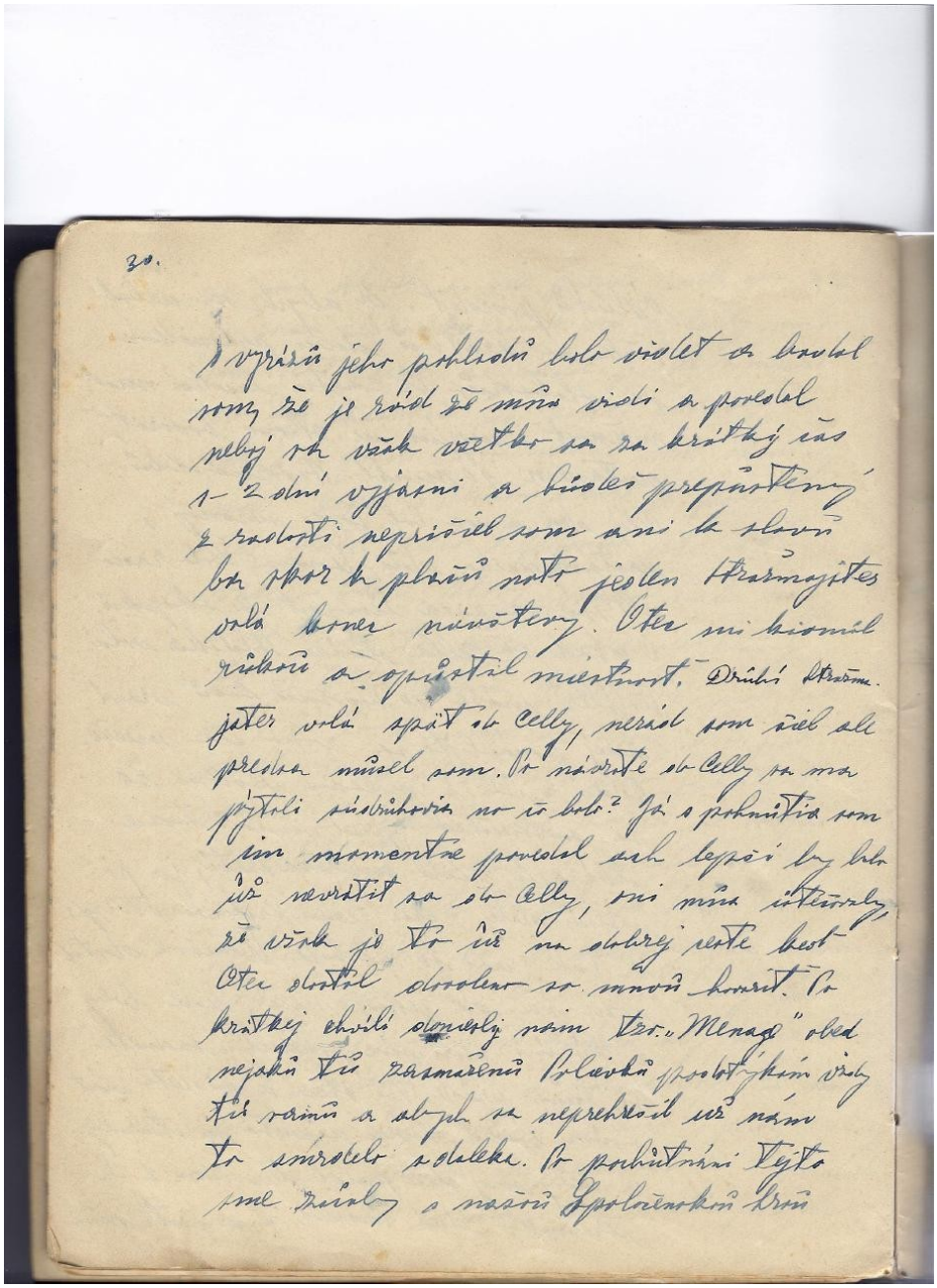

30.

V vyšších jeho pohľadoch bolo vidieť aj hneval
som že je rýchlo že mňa vidí a povedal
nebojí sa však večer sa za krátky čas
s ňou vyjasní a bude prepustený
z radosti nepriviedol som ani k slovu
ba skôr k plaču nato jeden strážmajstes
volá horeu návštevy. Otec mi hromadil
rúška a opustil miestnosť. Druhý strážm.
jeden volá späť do cely, neráď som šiel ale
predsa musel som. Po návrate do cely sa ma
pýtali súdruhovia no čo bolo? Ja s pokrčením
ním momentne povedal ach lepší by bolo
už nevrátiť sa do cely, mi mňa utešovali
že však je to už na obdobej veste bol
Otec odvolal odvolanie sa mnou hovoril. Po
krátkej chvíli odviedli nám večer. „Menaž" obed
nejakú tú zasmadenú polievku prebehnutím vždy
tú vrúcu a obyčajne sa nepreházil už nám
to smradlo odolalo. Po pobudnutí týždňa
sme dvaja s našou spolužiačkou Zdeňou

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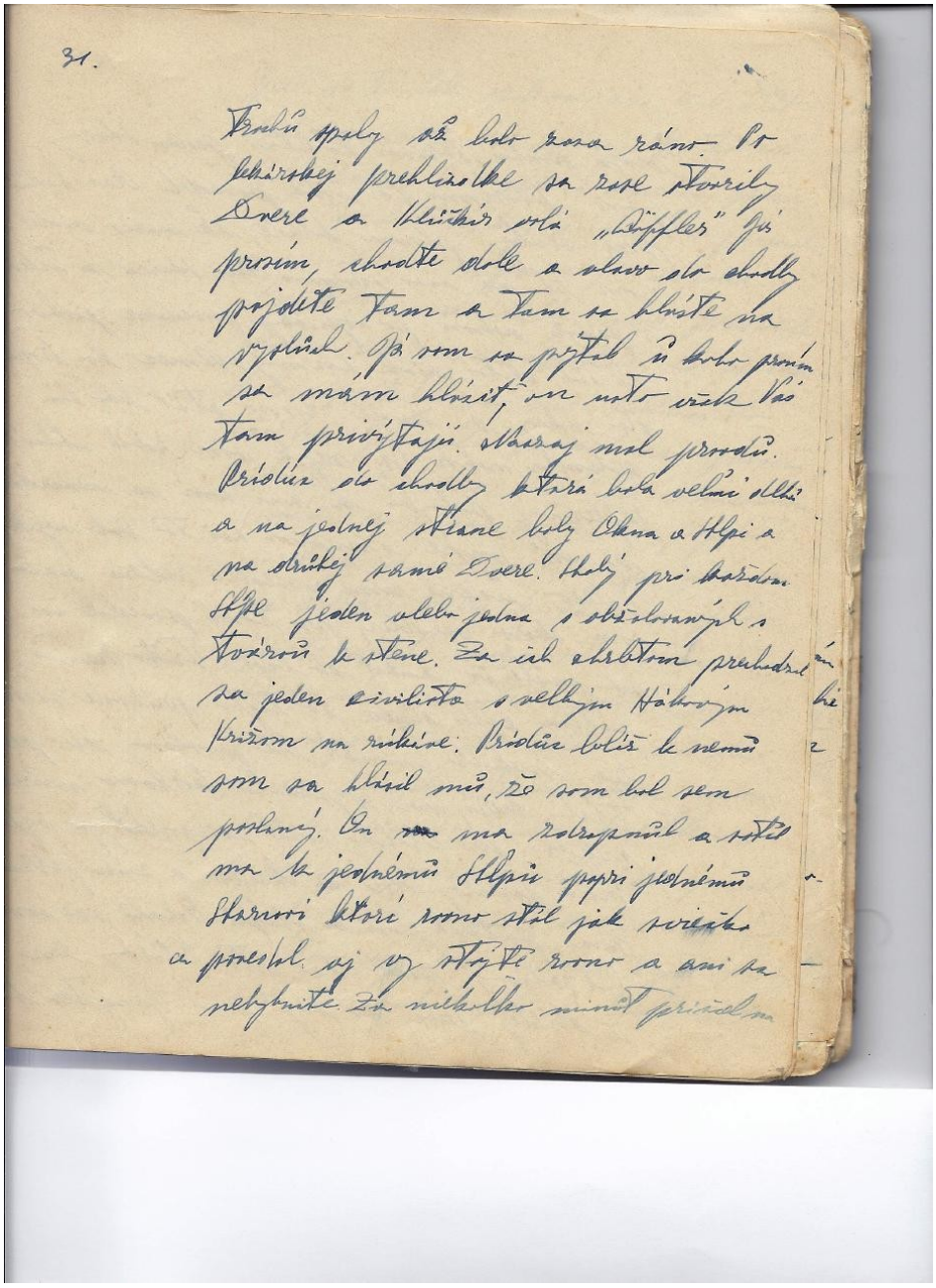
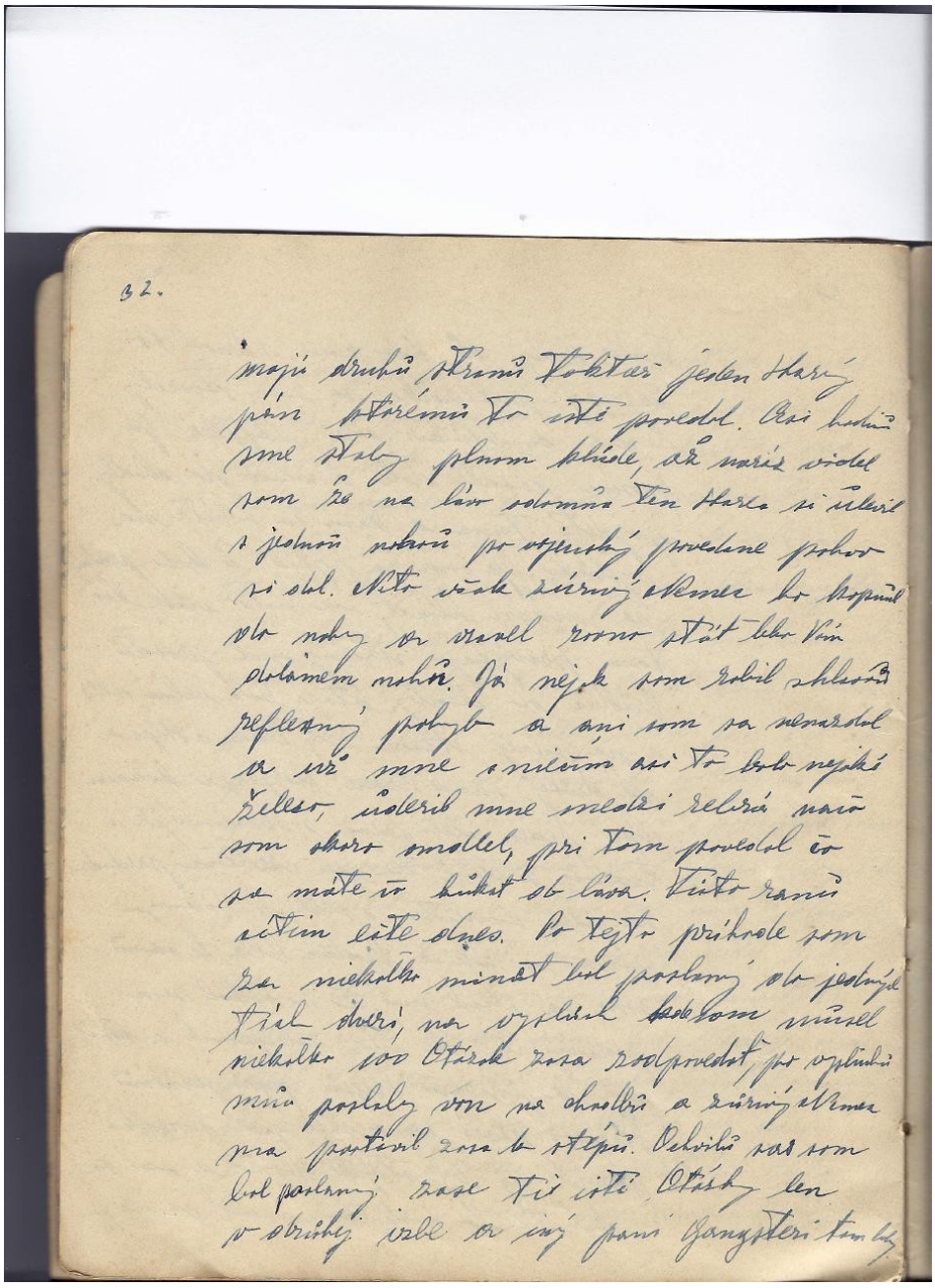


31.

Druhého spolu sme boli zase ráno
v lekárskej prehliadke sa zase stavili
Dvere a kňučiak volá „Düpfler" Ja
prosím, choďte dole a ešte ste
prejdete Tam a Tam sa hlásíte na
výslní. Ja som sa pýtal či treba prosím
sa mám hlásiť, on mi to viac Vás
Tam privítajú. Všade mal prevahu.
Priestor ako chodby kde bola veľmi dlhá
a na jednej strane boly Okna a Dvere
na druhej samé Dvere. Stoly pri kterých
sedí jeden vedľa jedna s obzvlášťnych s
Kozárov k stene. Za ich chrbtom prechádza
sa jeden civilista s veľkým Hákovým
Krížom na rukáve. Priestor bolí k nemu
som sa hlásil mu, že som bol sem
poslaný. On ma odtrepnul a stál
ma k jednému stolu popri jednému
starcovi ktorí mne stál jak svieska
a pozeral aj on Vojte mne a ani sa
nehybnite Za nikoho nemôt prísť na



32.

majú druhú stránku Doktori jeden starý
pán stáremu to iste povedal. Asi hodinu
sme stáli plnom kľude, až mňa videl
som že na ľavo odomňa tiež stará si úlevil
s jednou nohou po otlačený povedane pohor
si obul. Ako však zúrivý otkmeo ho kopnul
do nohy až vstal rovno stát keby vám
povedal mohol. Ja nejak som robil chlesnú
reflexný pohyb a ani som sa nenadal
a už mne s niečím asi to bolo nejaké
železo, uderil mne medzi rebrá mňa
som skoro omdlel, pri tom povedal čo
sa máte tu kukat do ľava. Viete ranu
sčítim ešte dnes. Po tejto príhode som
sa niekoľko minút bol postaraný do jedného
kúta ďalej, na výsluch bol som musel
niekoľko dní Otázok zase zodpovedať, po výsluchu
mňa poslaly von na chodbu a zúrivý otkmeo
mňa postavil zase do stĺpu. Odvolu zas som
bol poslaný, zase tí isti Otázky len
v obrátky, vždy do inej pani Gangsteri tomu hy

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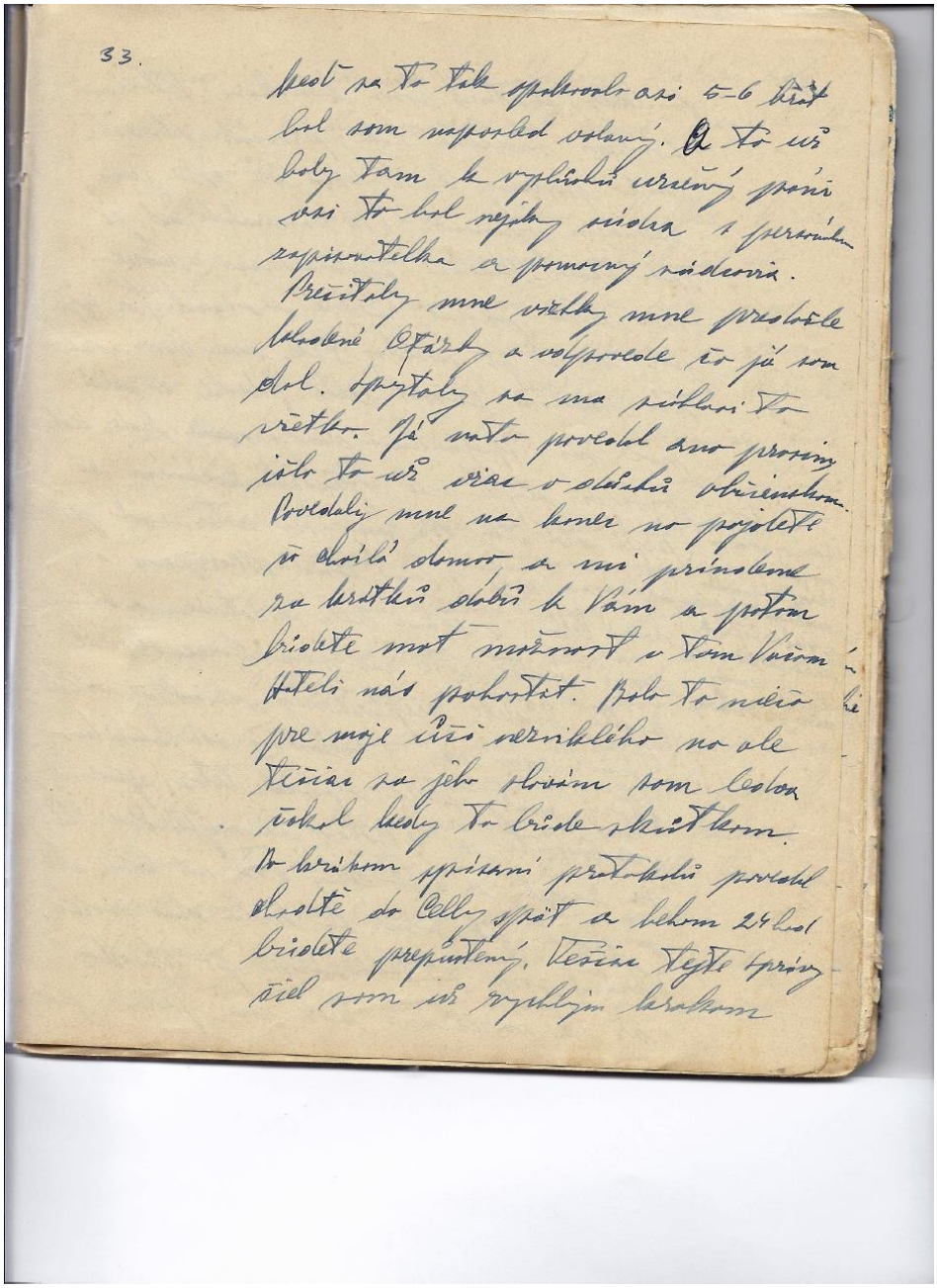
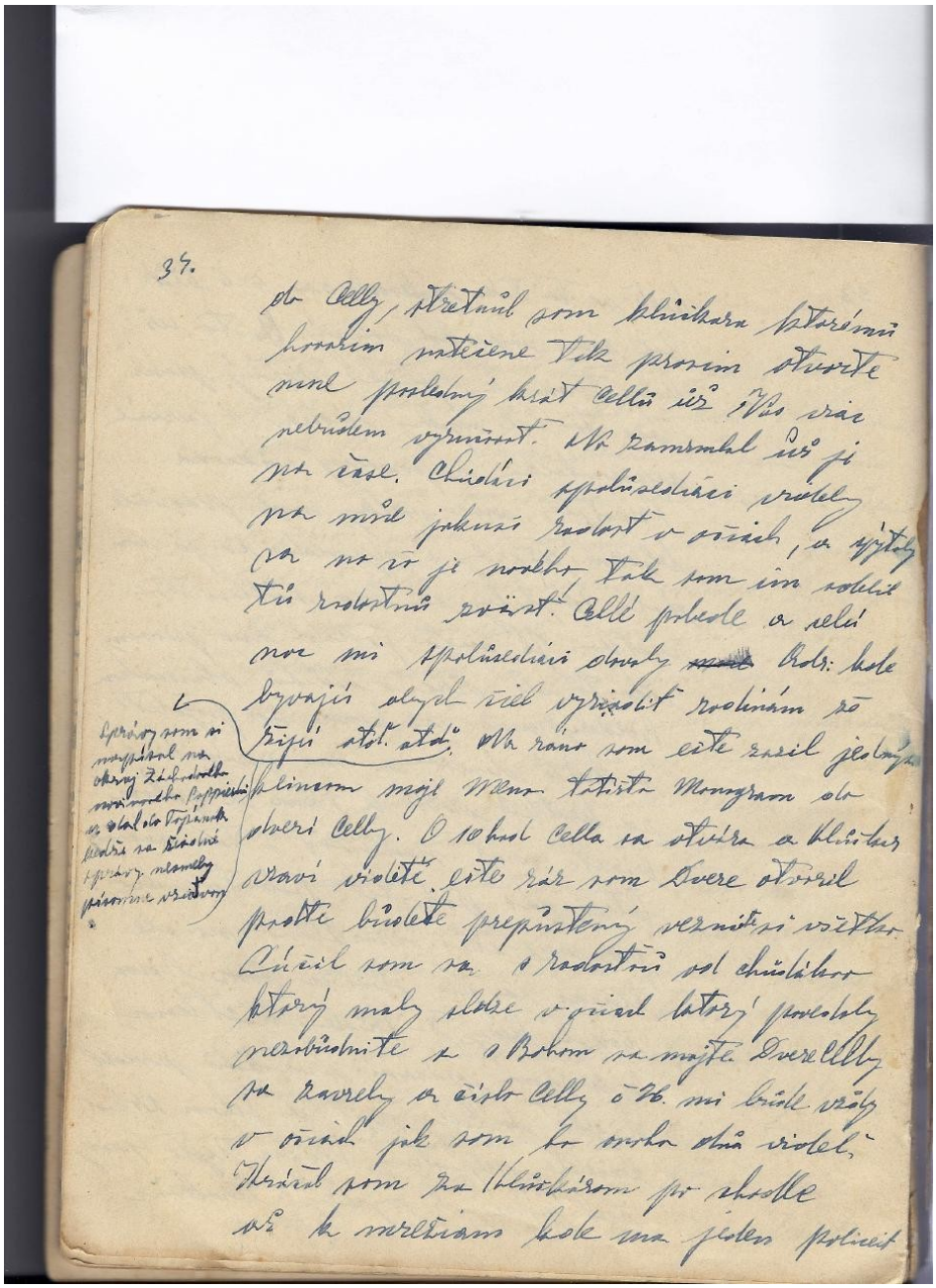

33.

Neskôr na to tiež spomínal asi 5–6 krát
bol som naposled volaný. A to už
boly tam len vyplašené ženy, prázdne
deti to bol nejaký zvláštny a pekný
zapisovateľka a pomocný nádenník.
Prečítali mne veľký mnoho prečítané
Obžaby a odpovedal to jú som
dal. Opýtali sa na niektoré to
vrátka. Já mu povedal ano pravdu
lebo to už viac o dňoch objasnilo.
Povedali mne na koniec no pozdejší
to dobrú domov a mi prinesieme
za krátkú dobrú k Vám a potom
bríšete mať možnosť o tom Vašom
Hoteli nás pohovoriť. Bolo to niečo
pre moje ďalší nerozhľadného no ale
Ticiar na jeho slovám som čakal
čakal kedy to bríde skončí tom.
To krátkom opísaní prečítaní povedal
chodiť do Celly späť a behom 24 hod
bríšete prepustený. Keďže tejto správy
šiel som už vyhlížajm kratkom



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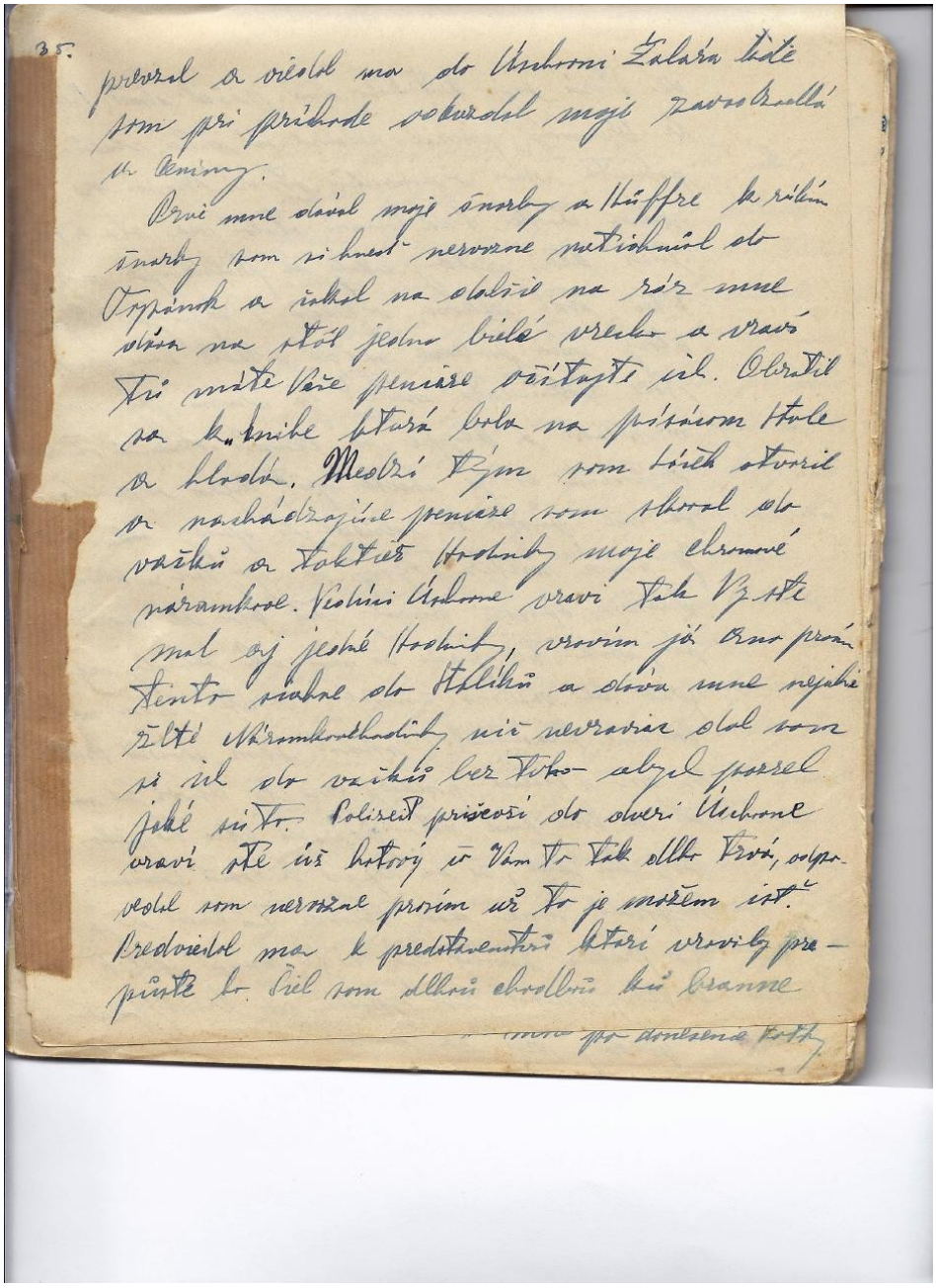

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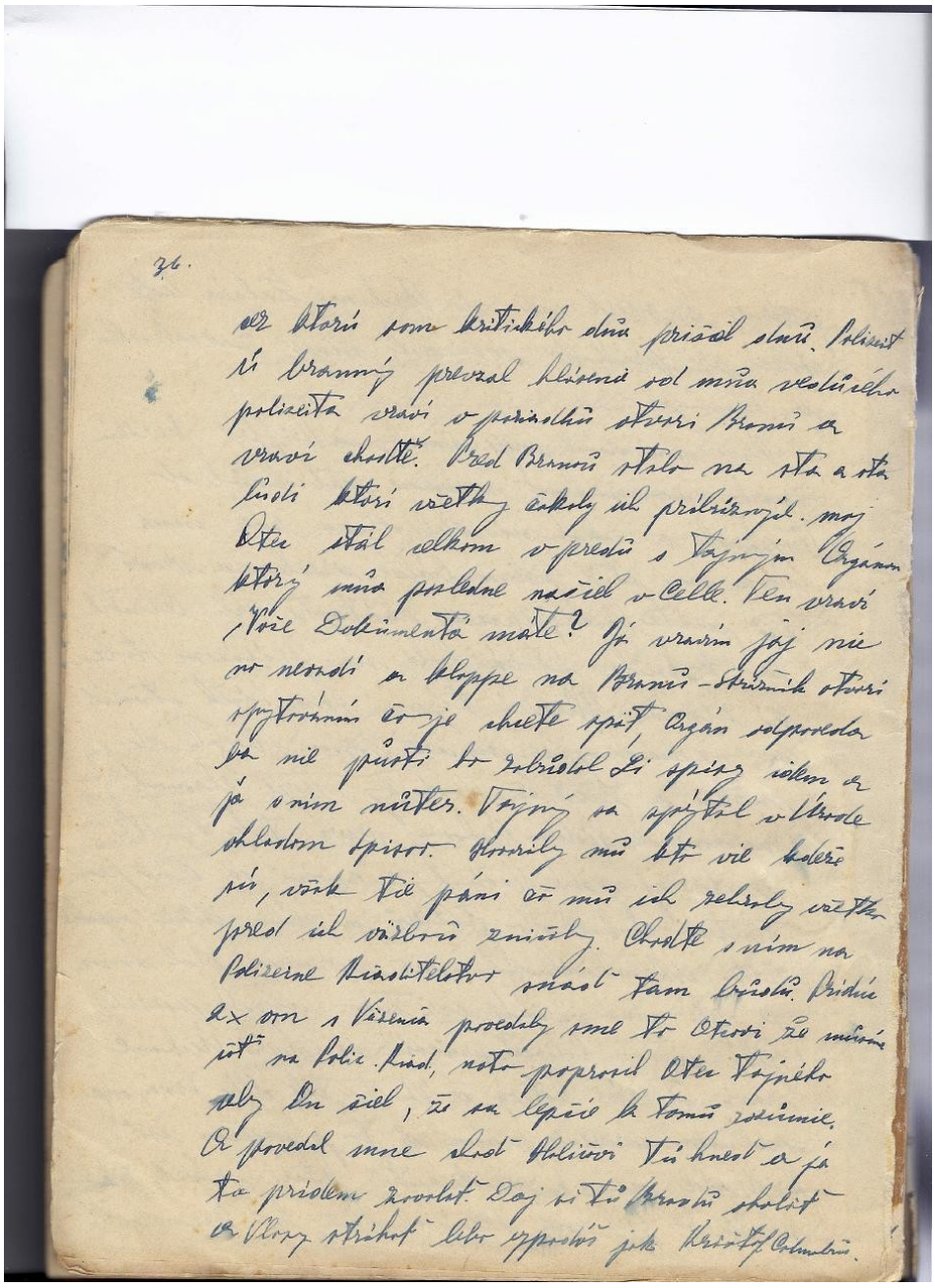

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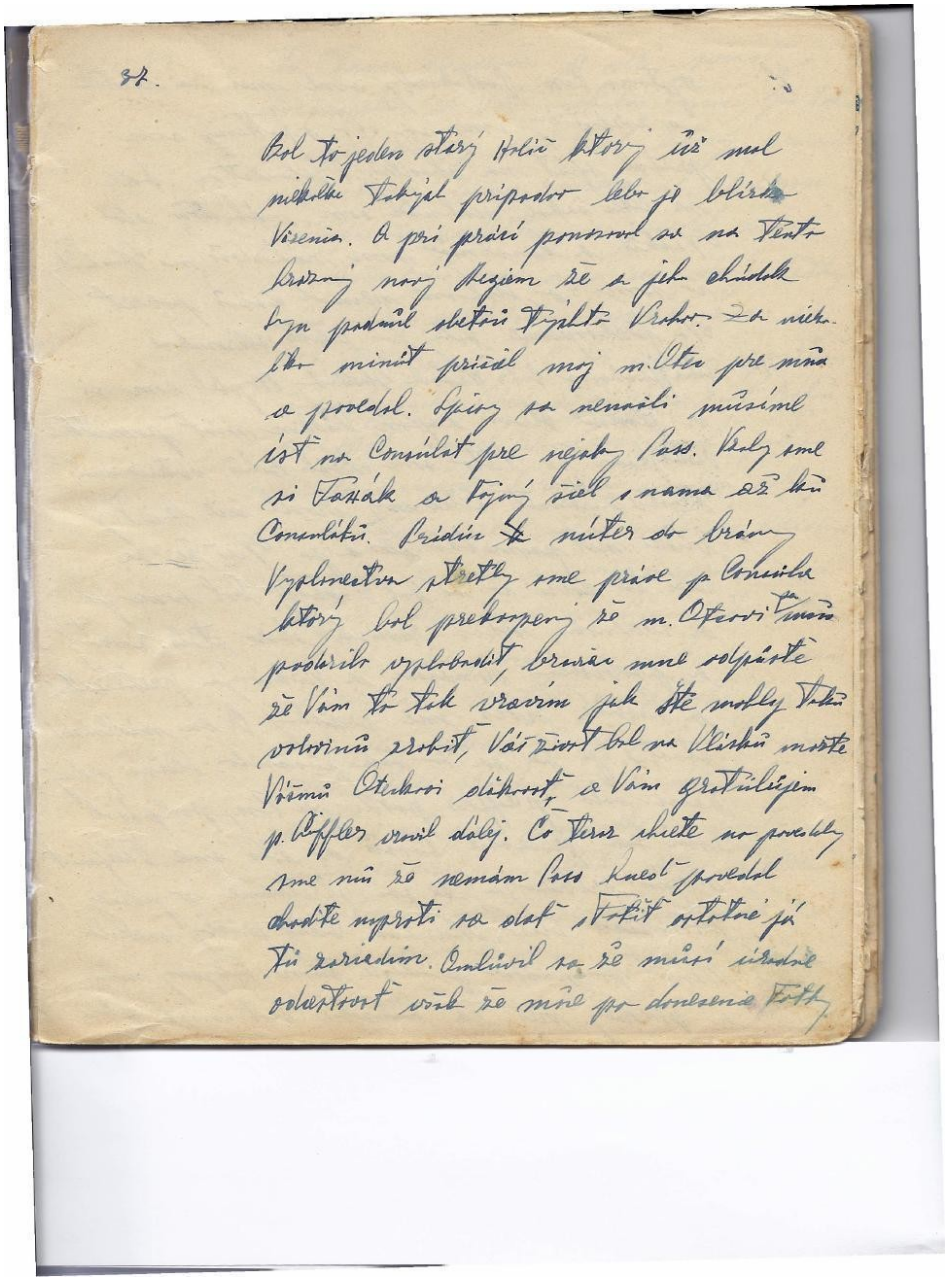

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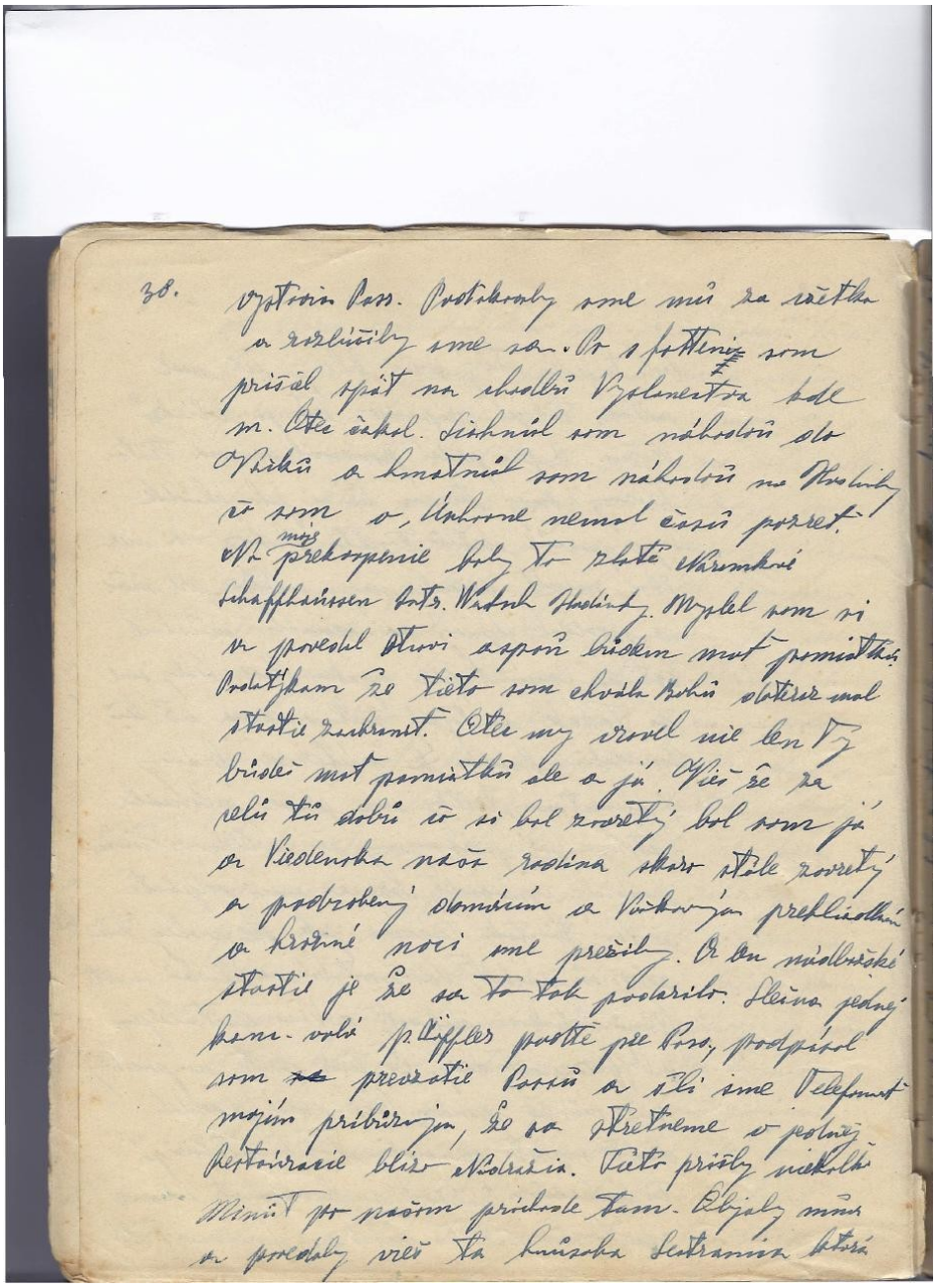

38.

Vystrihli Boss. Postihovaly sme nás za vätka a rozlúčily sme sa. Pri spätnej ceste som prišiel späť na chodbu Vyšetrovňa bola m. Otec čakal. Sichnúl som náhodou do Príkazu a hneď som náhodou na Poslednú vec som v, Uhorsku nemal často pozrieť Na mojej prekvapenie bolo tu zlaté Ukrajinské Schaffhausen bolo. Vrátil Hodinky. Myslel som si v preskúmal Otvori aspoň Búdam mať pomiatku Podarilo sa že Vieta som chodila Bohu ďakujem mal Starší Zachránil. Otec mi vravel nie len Z Búdeš mať pomiatku ale a ja. Viem že za celú tú dobu čo si bol zavretý, bol som ja a Niekoľko naši rodina stále zavretý a podrobený ponáhľam a Vidím ja prekliatu a krásne noci sme prežili. A ten môžeš Starší je že sa to tak podarilo. Sleina jedného som volá pilíkles pustil pre Boss, podpísal som ~~sa~~ prezratie Boss a ďalší sme Veľkomať mojím príbuzným, že sa Ukrajine v poľnej Reštaurácie blízko Nádražia. Títo prišly niekoľko Minút po našom príchode tam. Objali mňa a povedali viem ťa hľadala Sestrenica Betka

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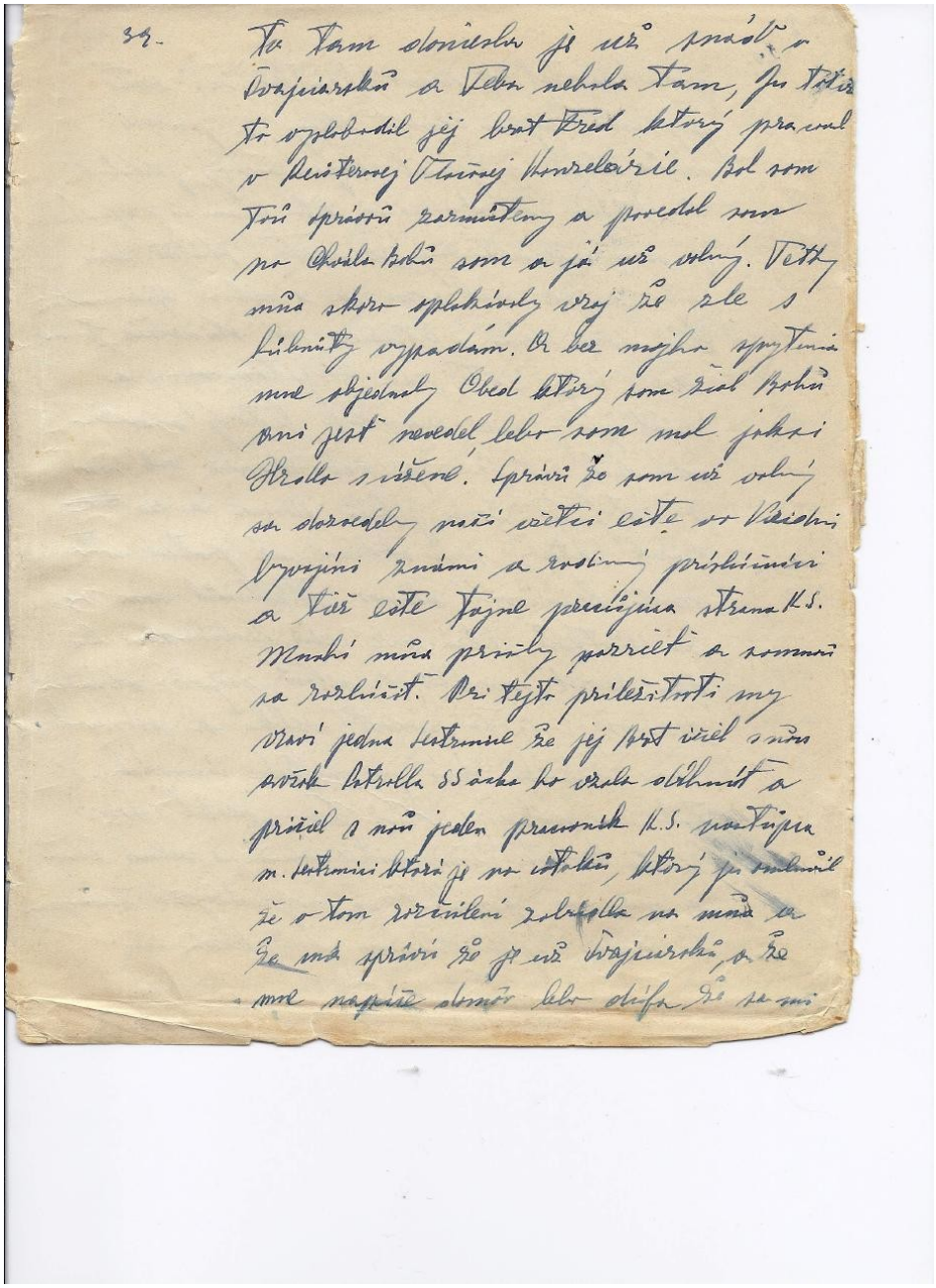

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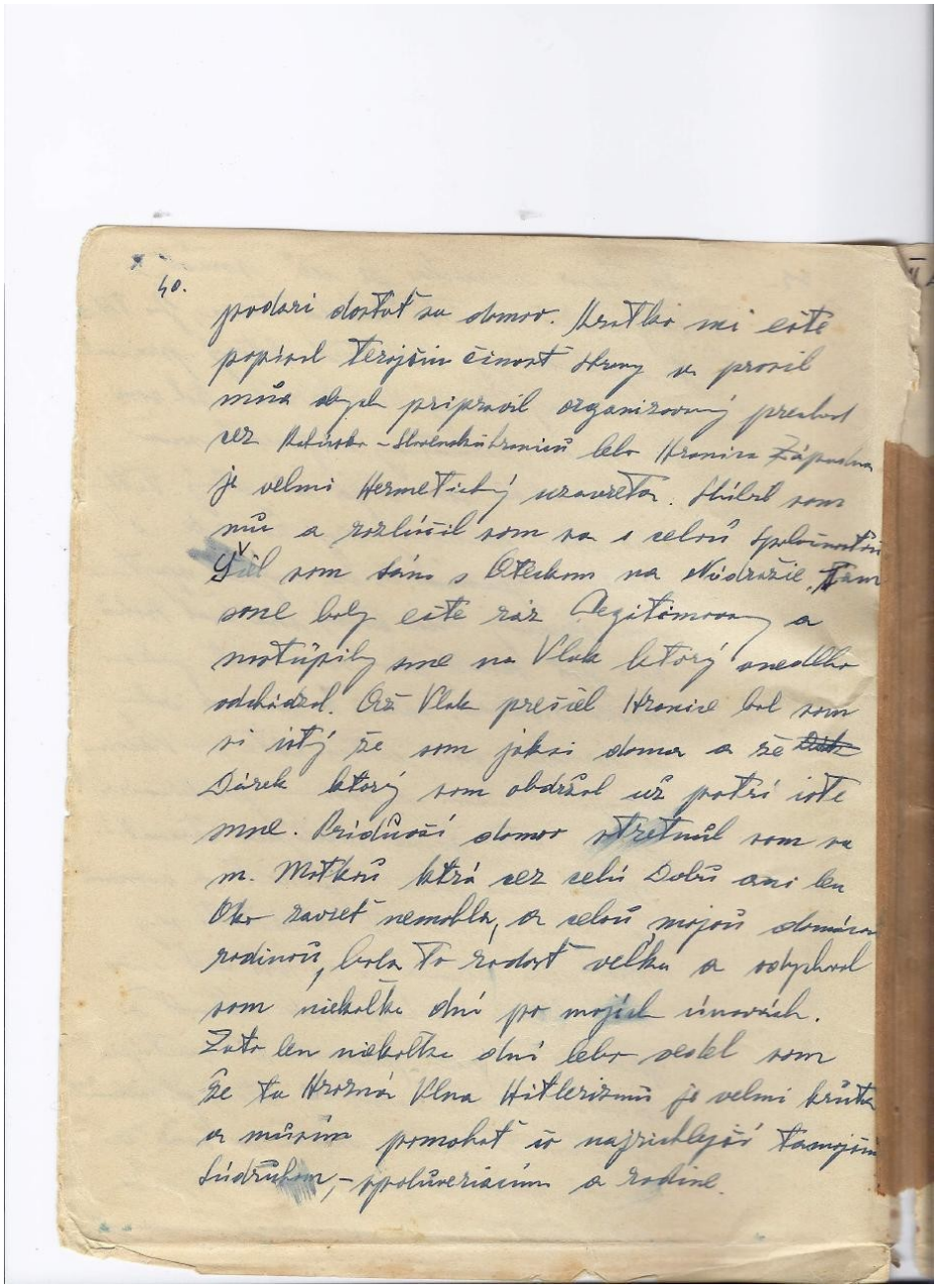

40.

prosbári dostať sa domov. Kruťkí mi ešte popísal Terajšiu činnosť skupiny a prosil ma aby som pripravil organizovanú prechod cez Rakúsko-Slovenskú hranicu lebo Hranica Žilinského je veľmi Hermeticky uzavretá. Súhlasil som ním a rozlúčil som sa s celou Skupinou Gid som späť s Otcekom na Vidraňu. Tam sme boly ešte raz Legitimovaný a nastúpily sme na Vlak ktorý sme celkom odchádzal. Cez Vlak prešiel Kroniec but som si istý že som jakási doma a že Dárek ktorý som obdržal už patrí iste mne. Priduvaj domov Vrátil som sa m. Motkov ktorá cez celú Dobu ani ke Otcovi navrieť nemohla, or celou mojou domácou rodinou, bola To radosť velka a vzpomenul som niekolko dní po mojich únosoch. Zato len niekolko dní lebo zistil som že ta Krvavá Vlna Hitlerizmu je velmi krutá a mňama pomahať už najviac Tamojším Súdruhom, spolupracovníkom a rodine.

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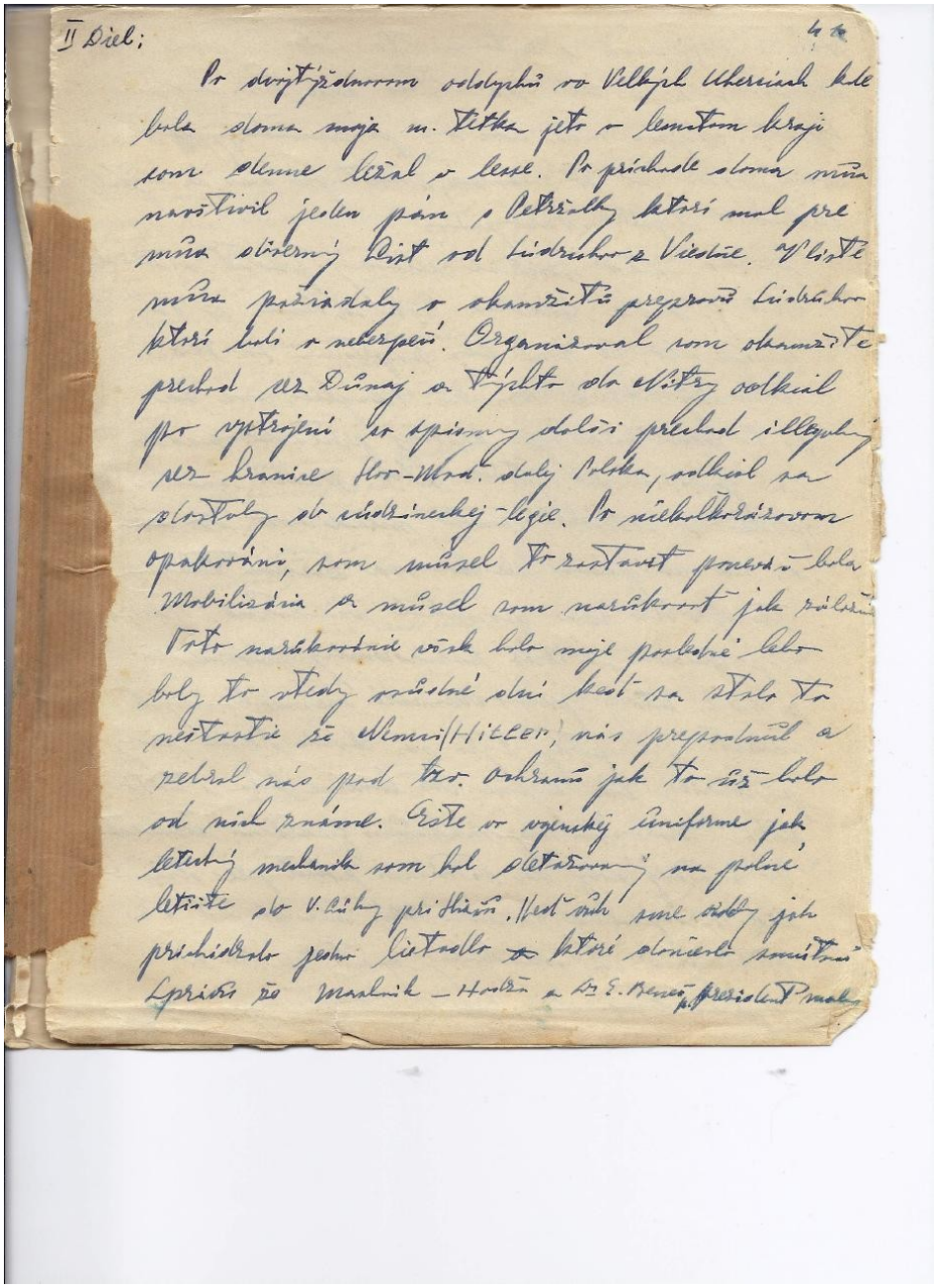

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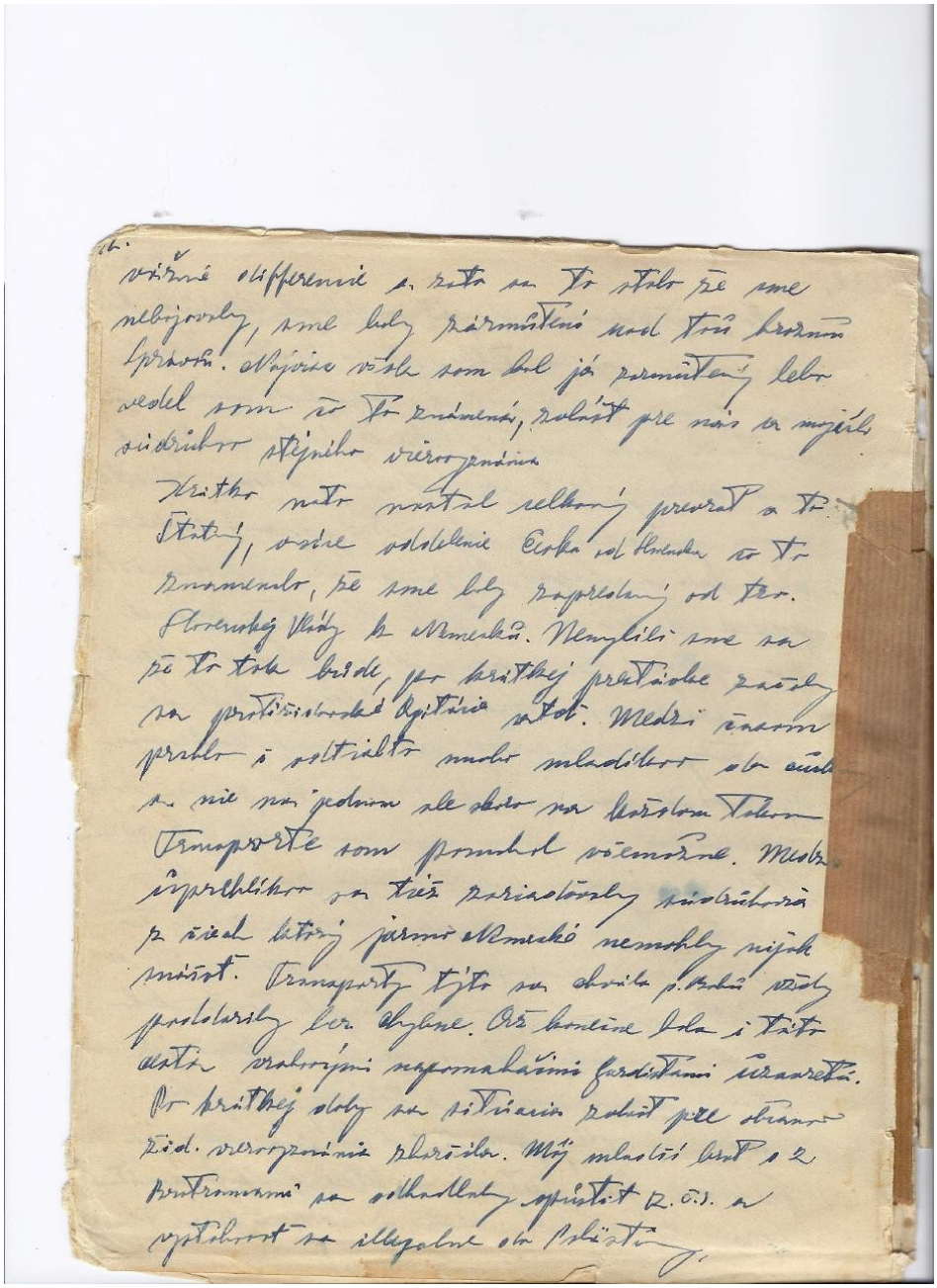

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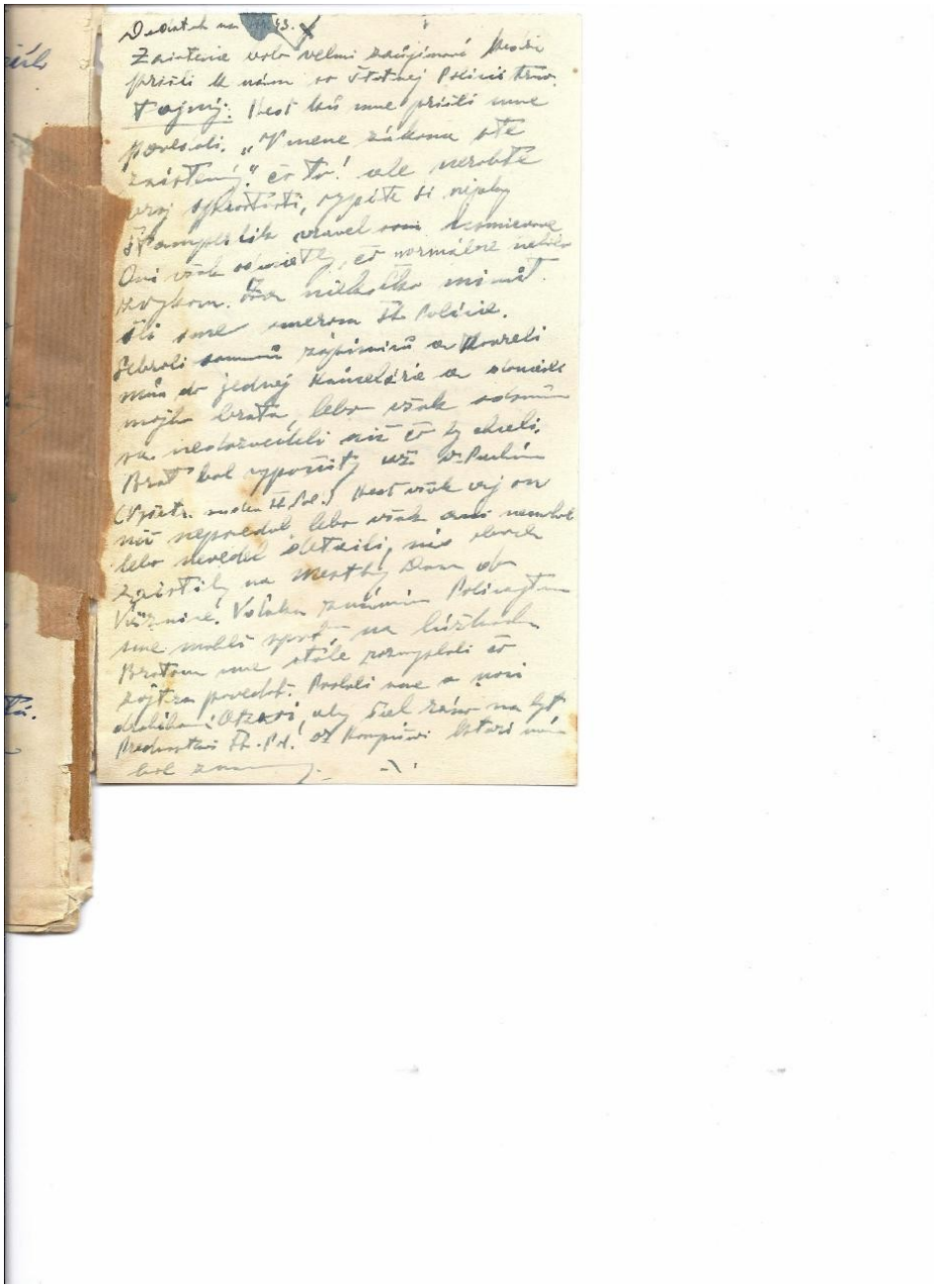

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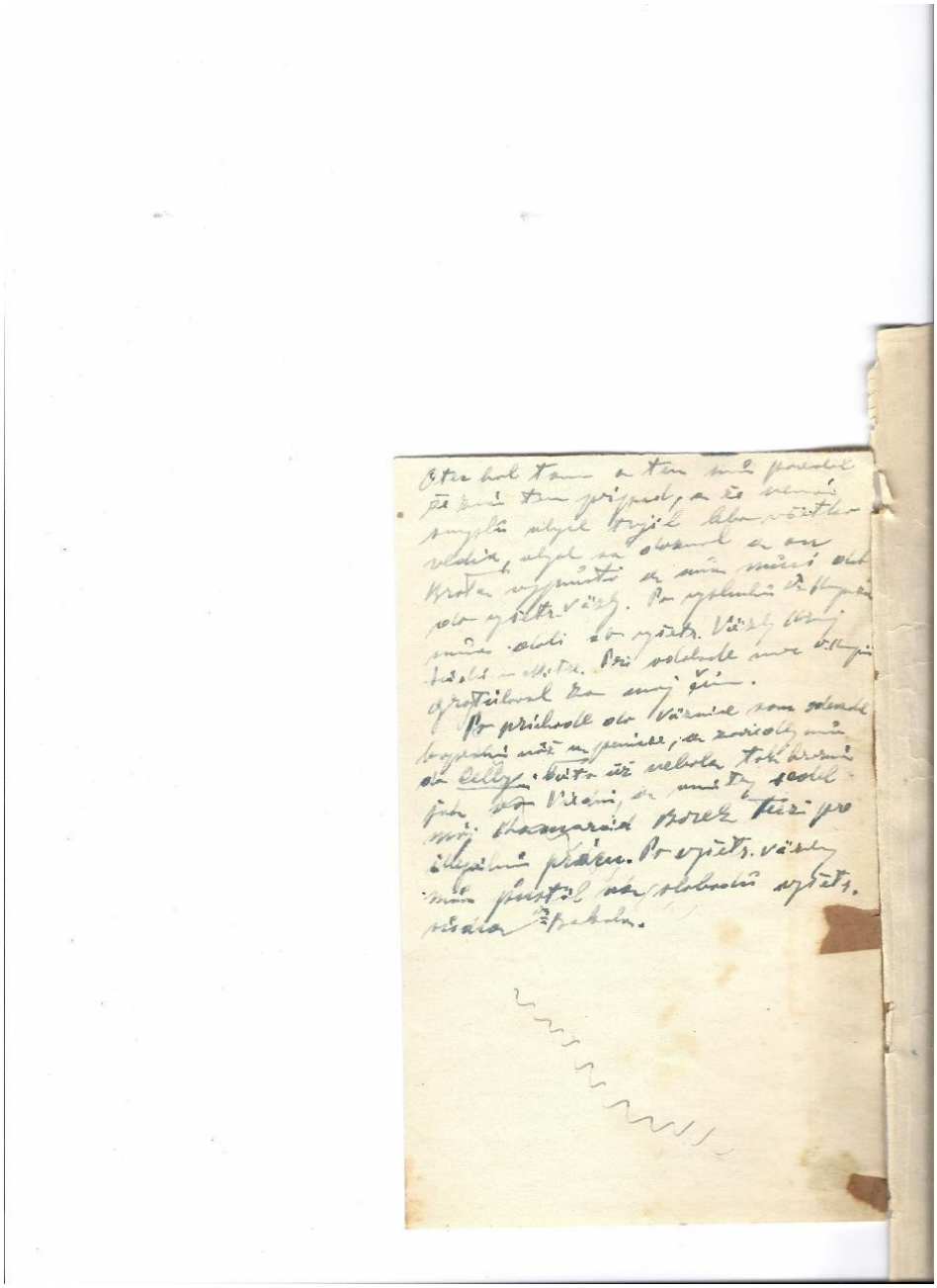

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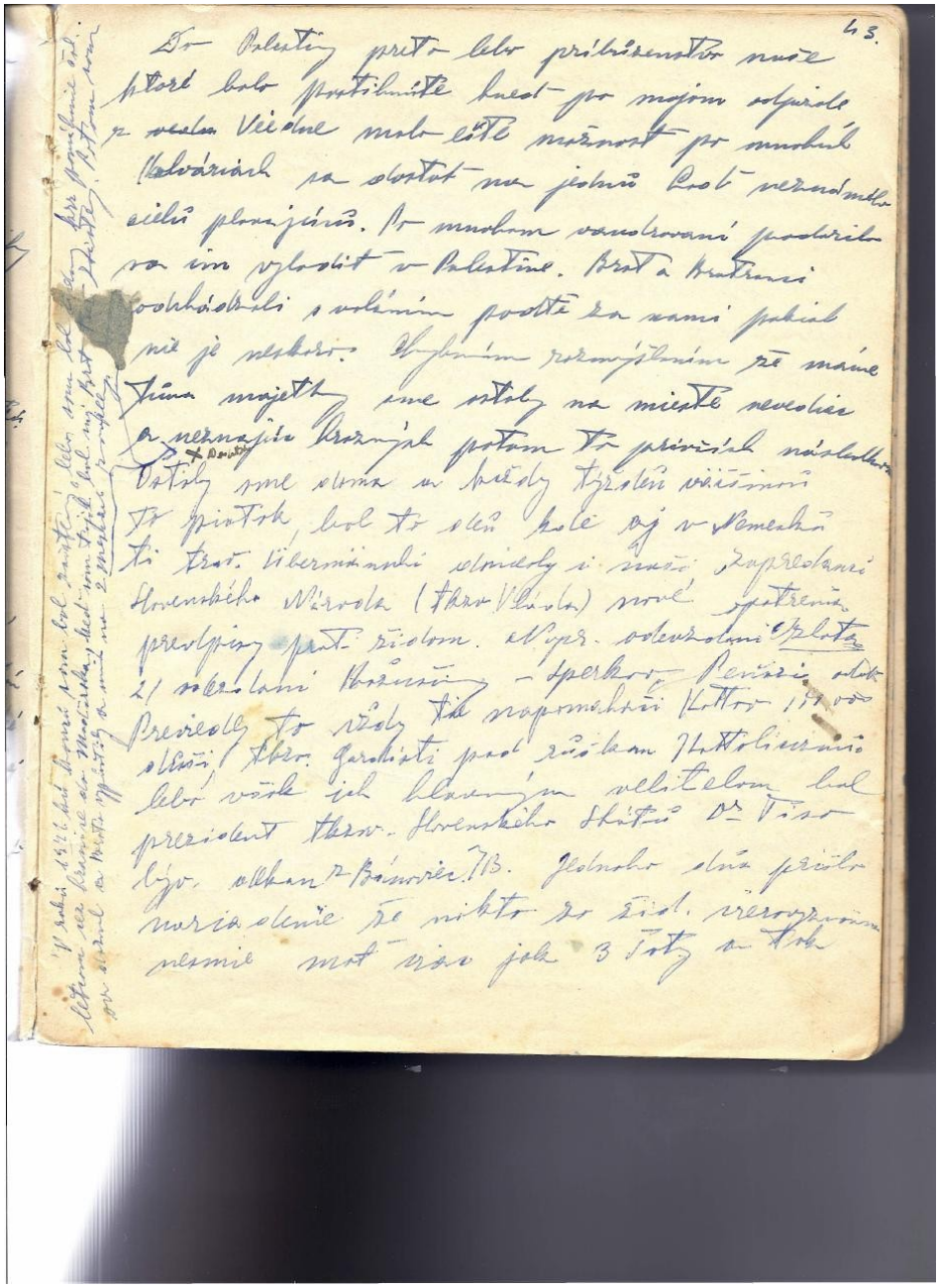

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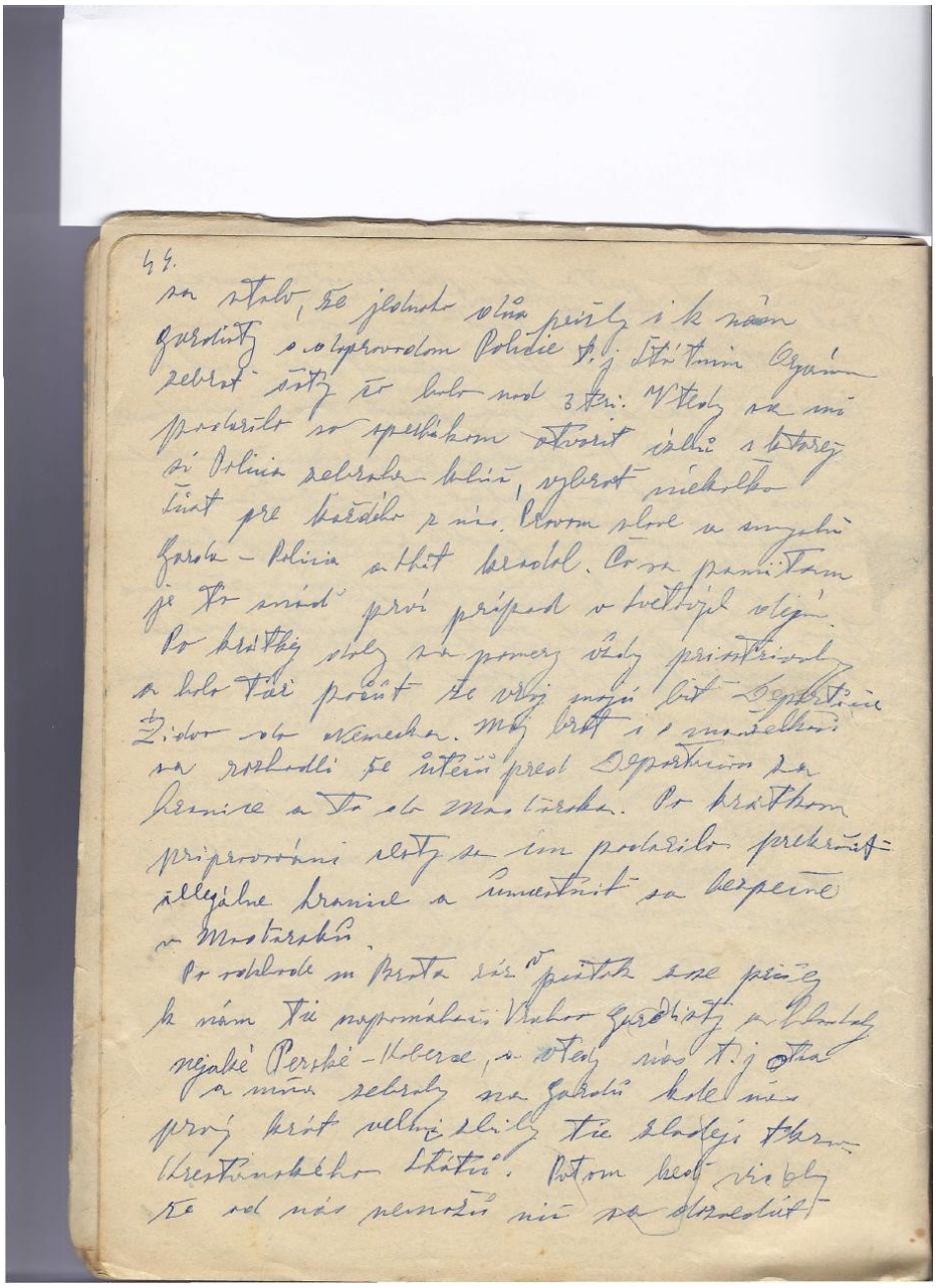

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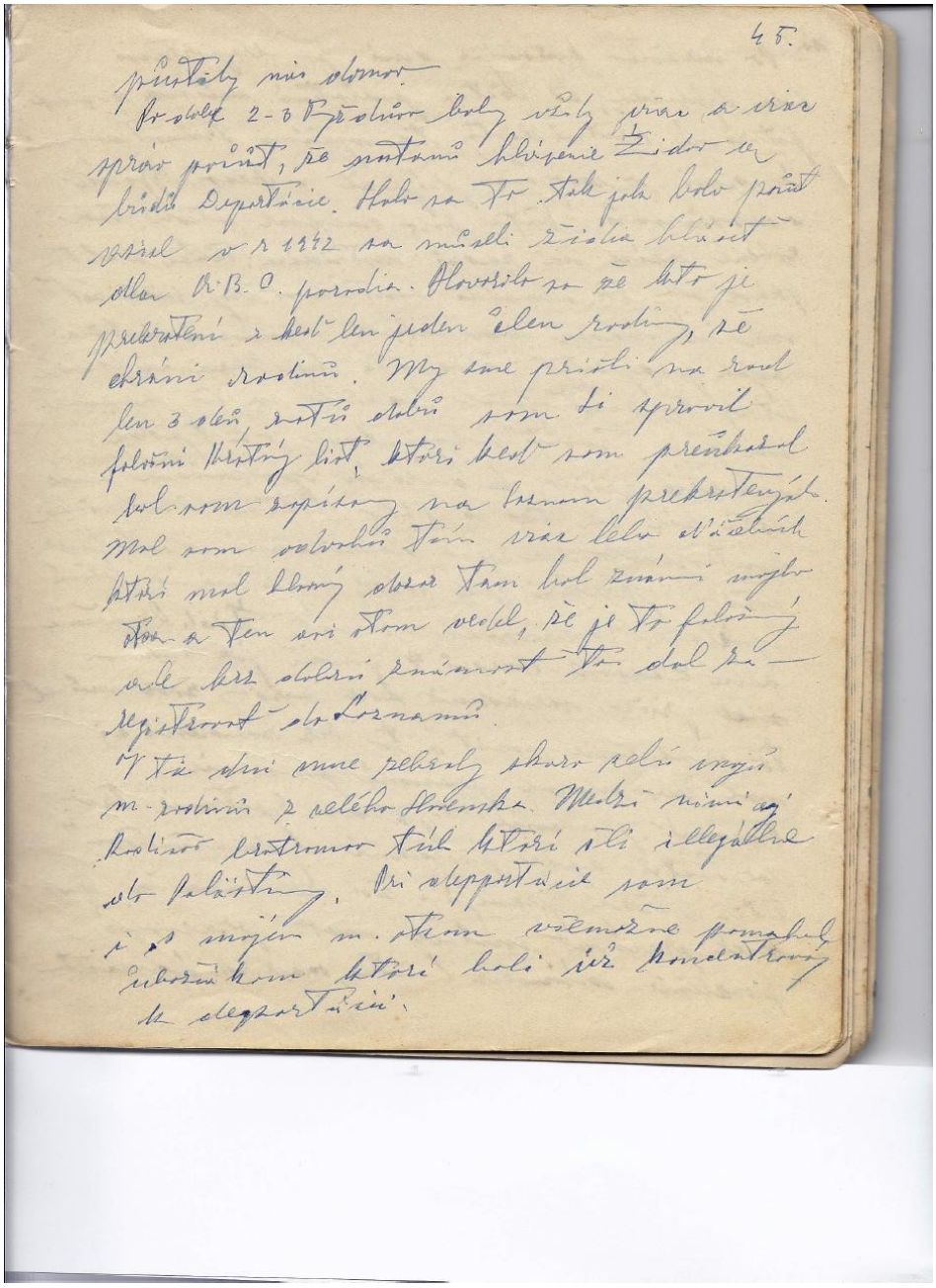

45.

púšťaly nás domov
Pri volbe 2-o Vyslúžilcov boly veľký prísne a zriadz
správ prísť, že smutná skúpenie Židov za
bridá Departácie. Hrdo sa Tv. Stále jeho bolo prísť
späsil v r 1942 sa musely Židia skúsiť
oblasť O.B.O. povrdia. Oboznámilo sa že kto je
prekvapení a kedy len jeden člen rodiny, že
ohrání rodinu. My sme prišli na rad
len 3 dňa, ktorí dobrú sme ti zpravil
falošní krstný list, ktorí kedy sme prečkal
bol som zapísaný na krsnom prekrstenýdh.
Mal som vedomí Tám viac ľudia ako ľudských
ktorí mal kamý obsah Tam bol známi mojho
otca a ten ani otom vedel, že je Tv falošný
vedel kde ohrání známovať Tv. dal sa —
registrovať do Lozorama.
My Tá dni sme pobrali skoro celú army
m. rodinu z celého Slovenska. Medzi nimi aj
Rodinu krstnomor Tiek ktorí šli ilegálne
do Palestíny. Pri odporučení sam
i s mojim m. otcom vrelmožne pomahal
ľuďom kom ktorí boli už kandidátkovy
do odporučení.

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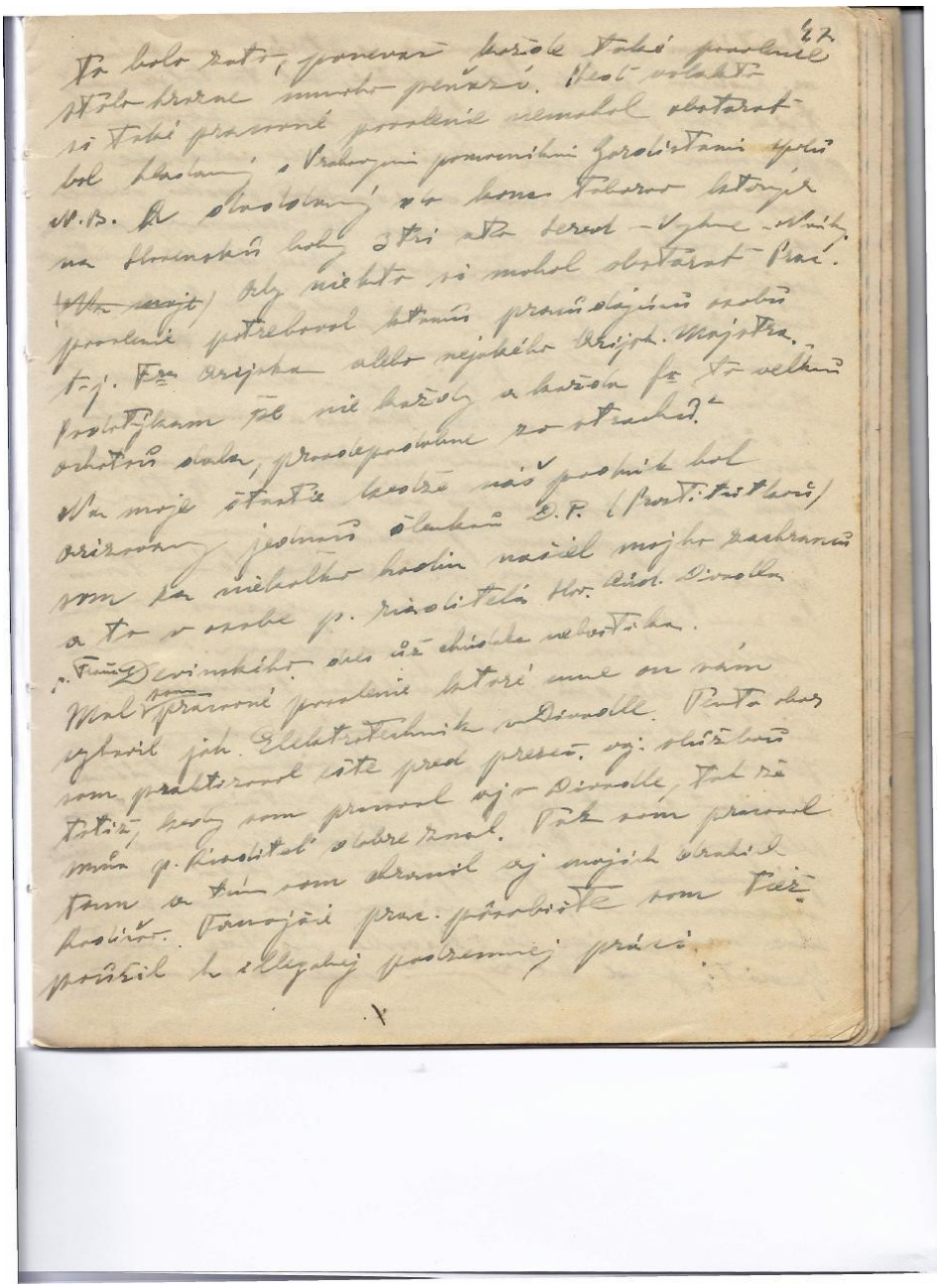

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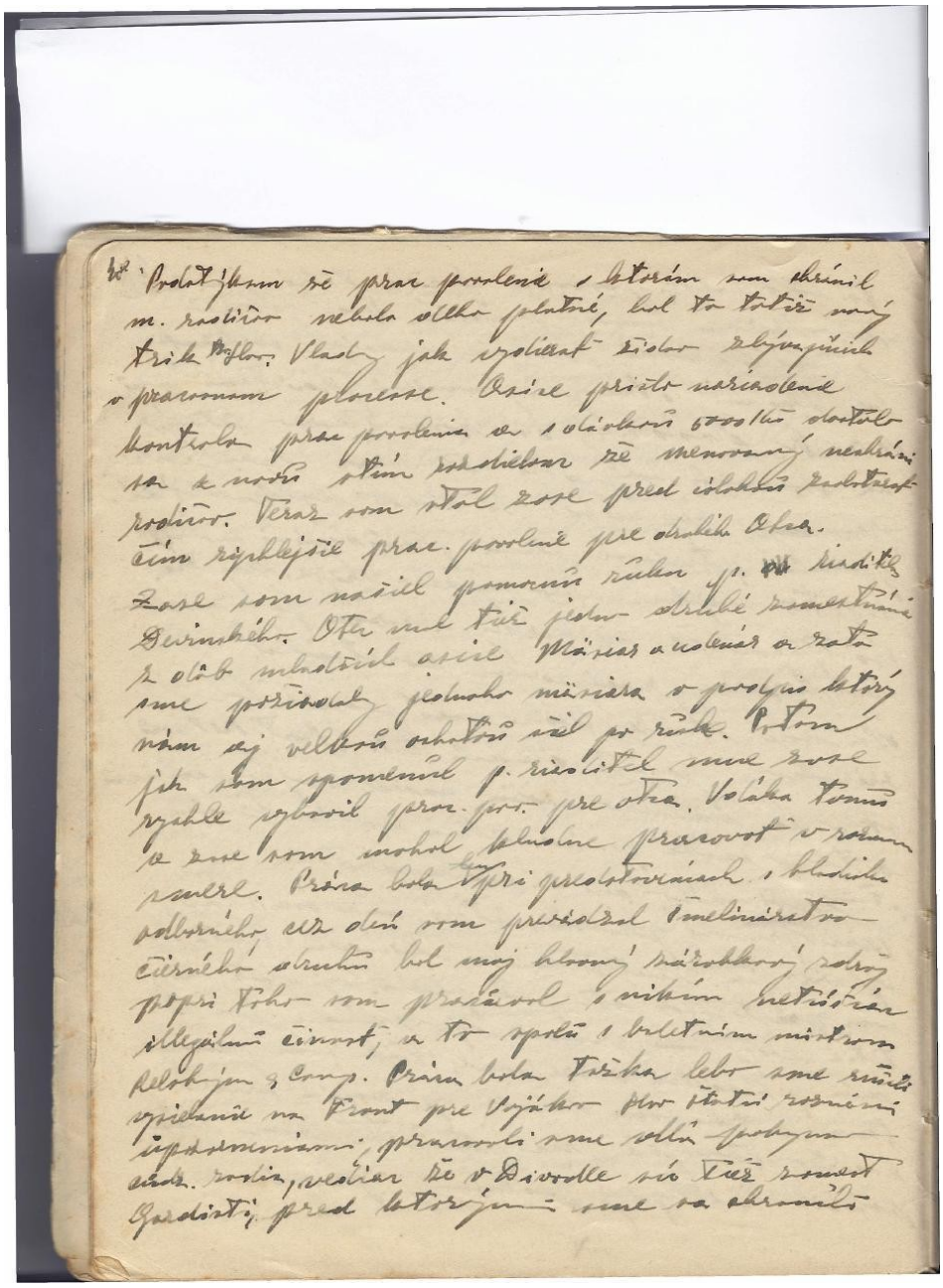

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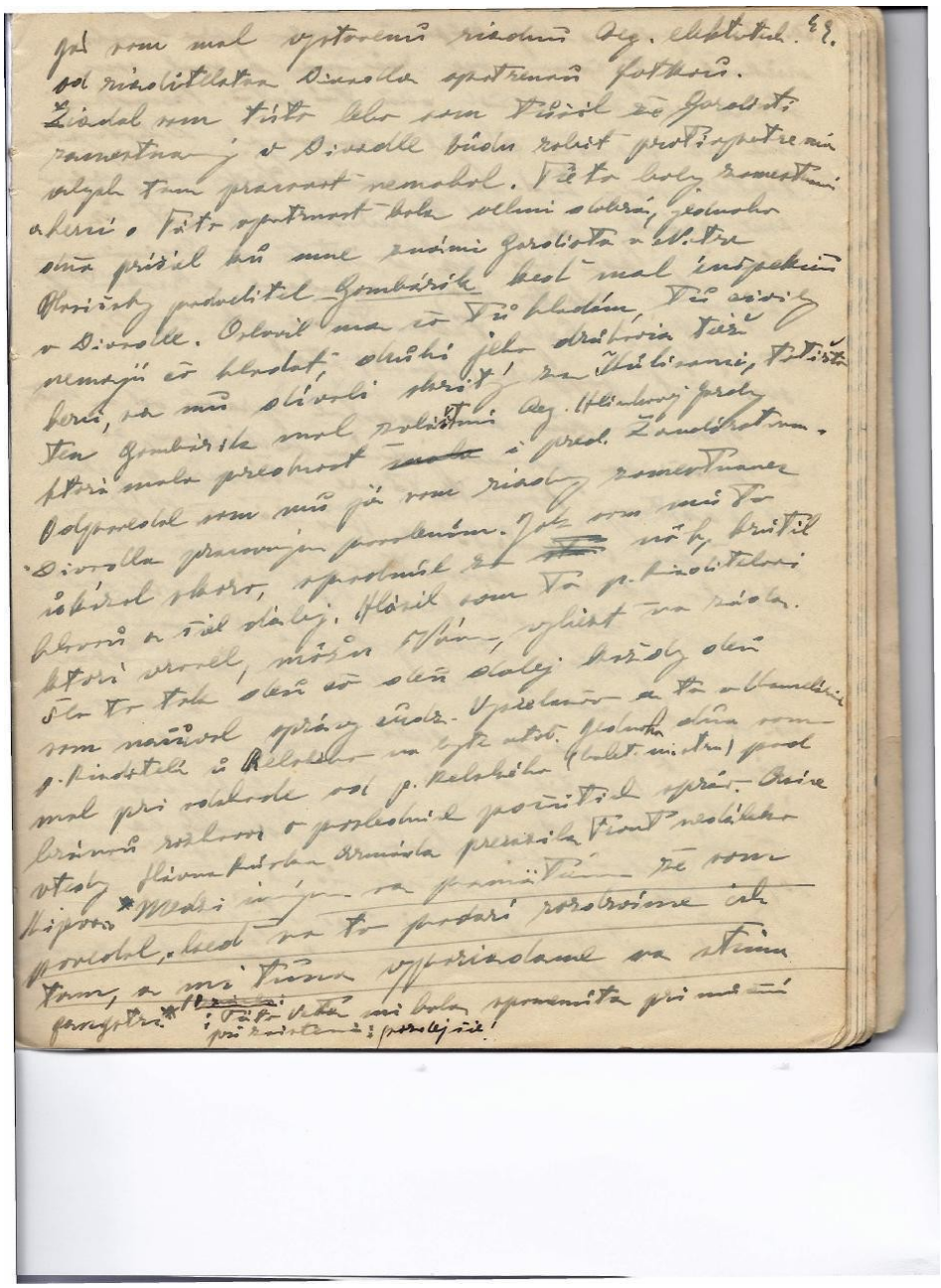

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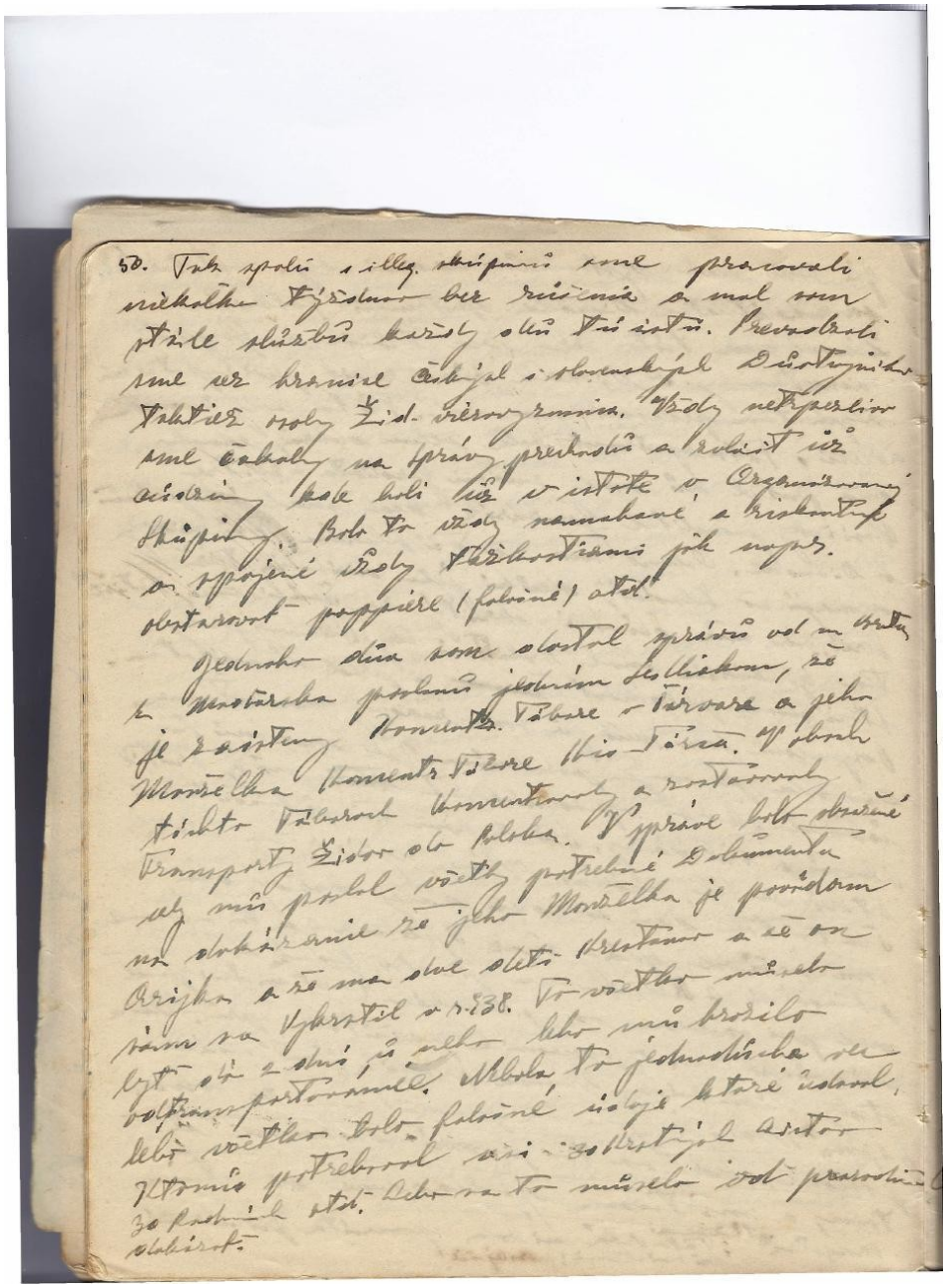

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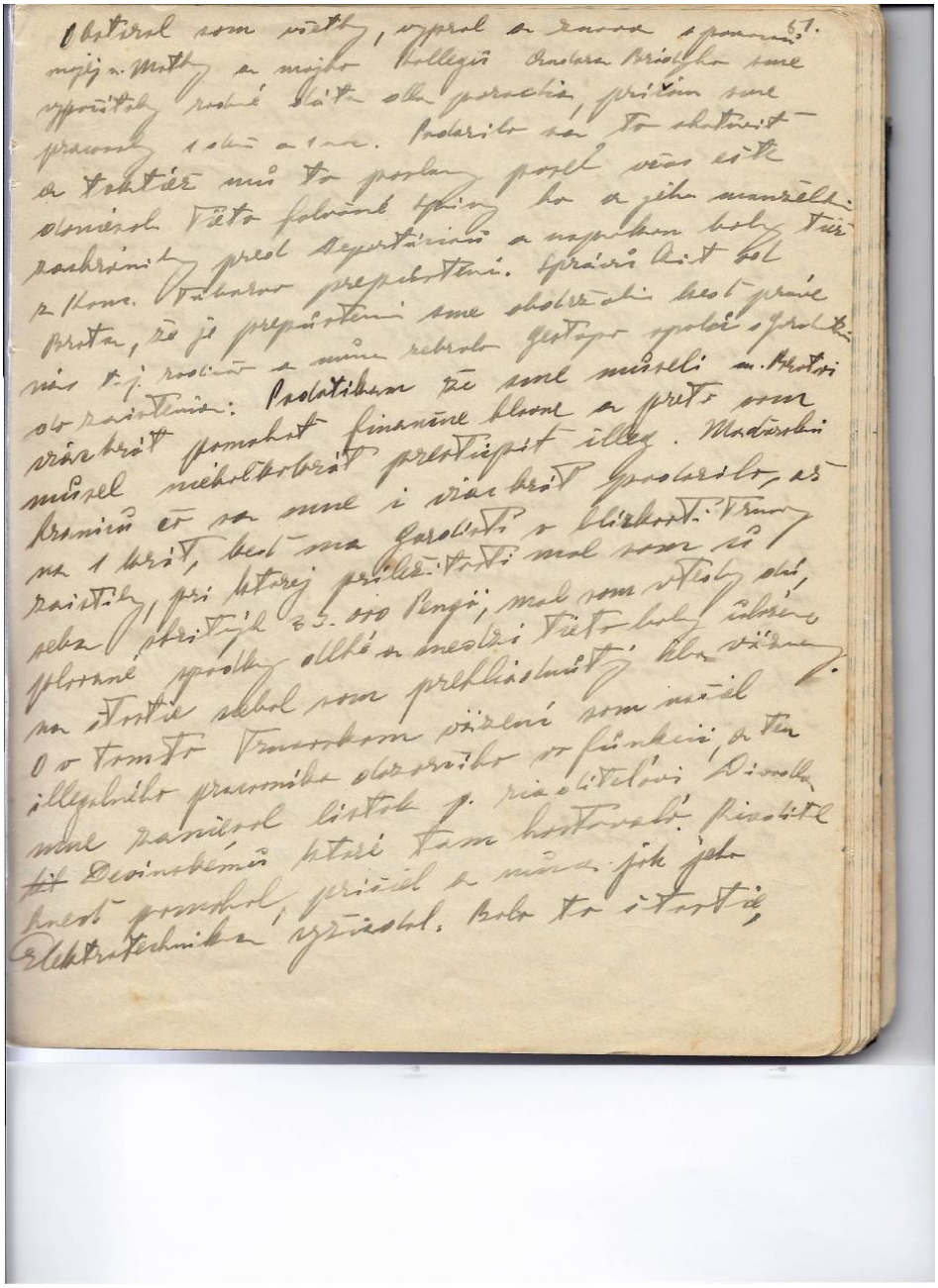

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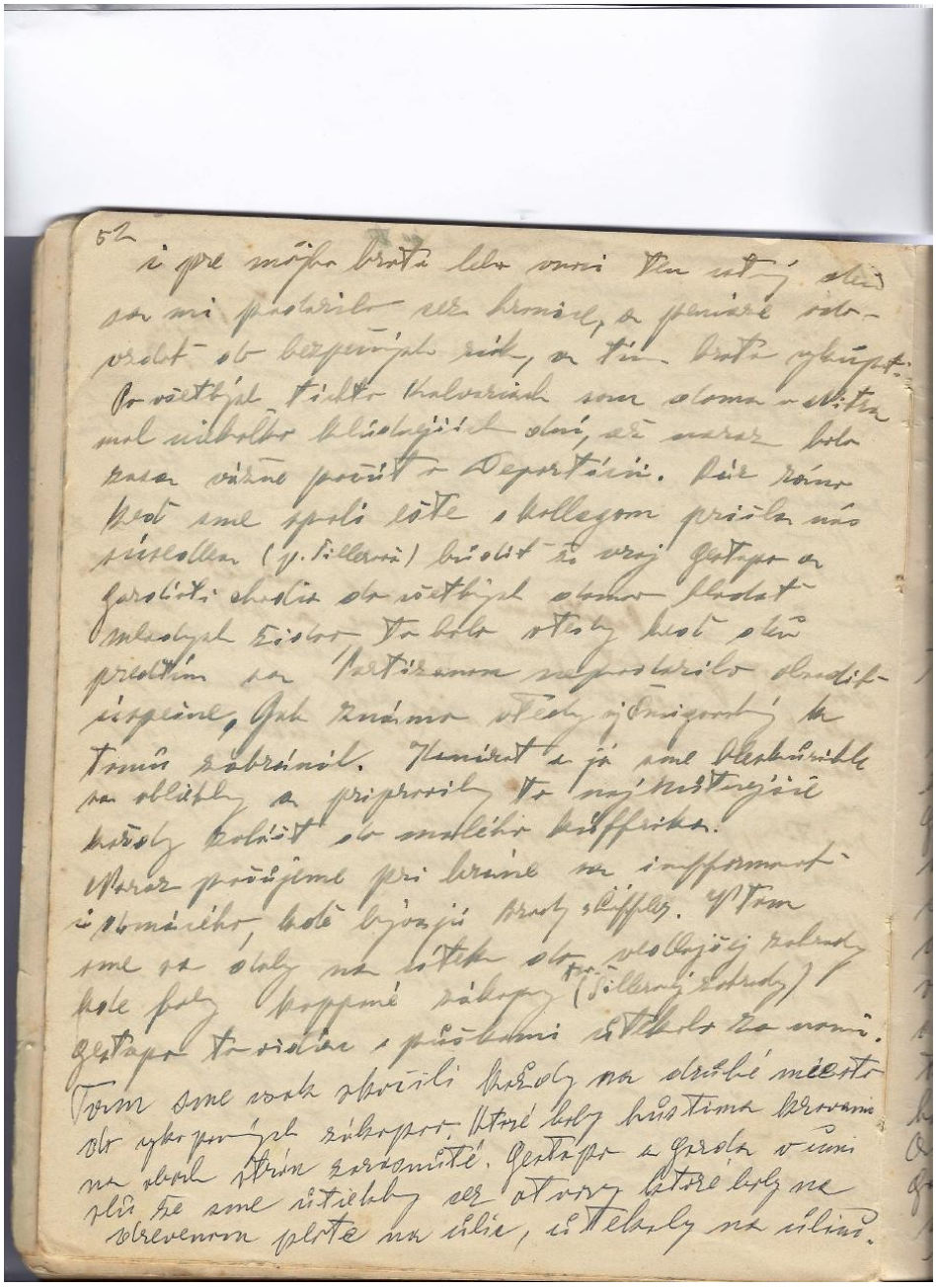

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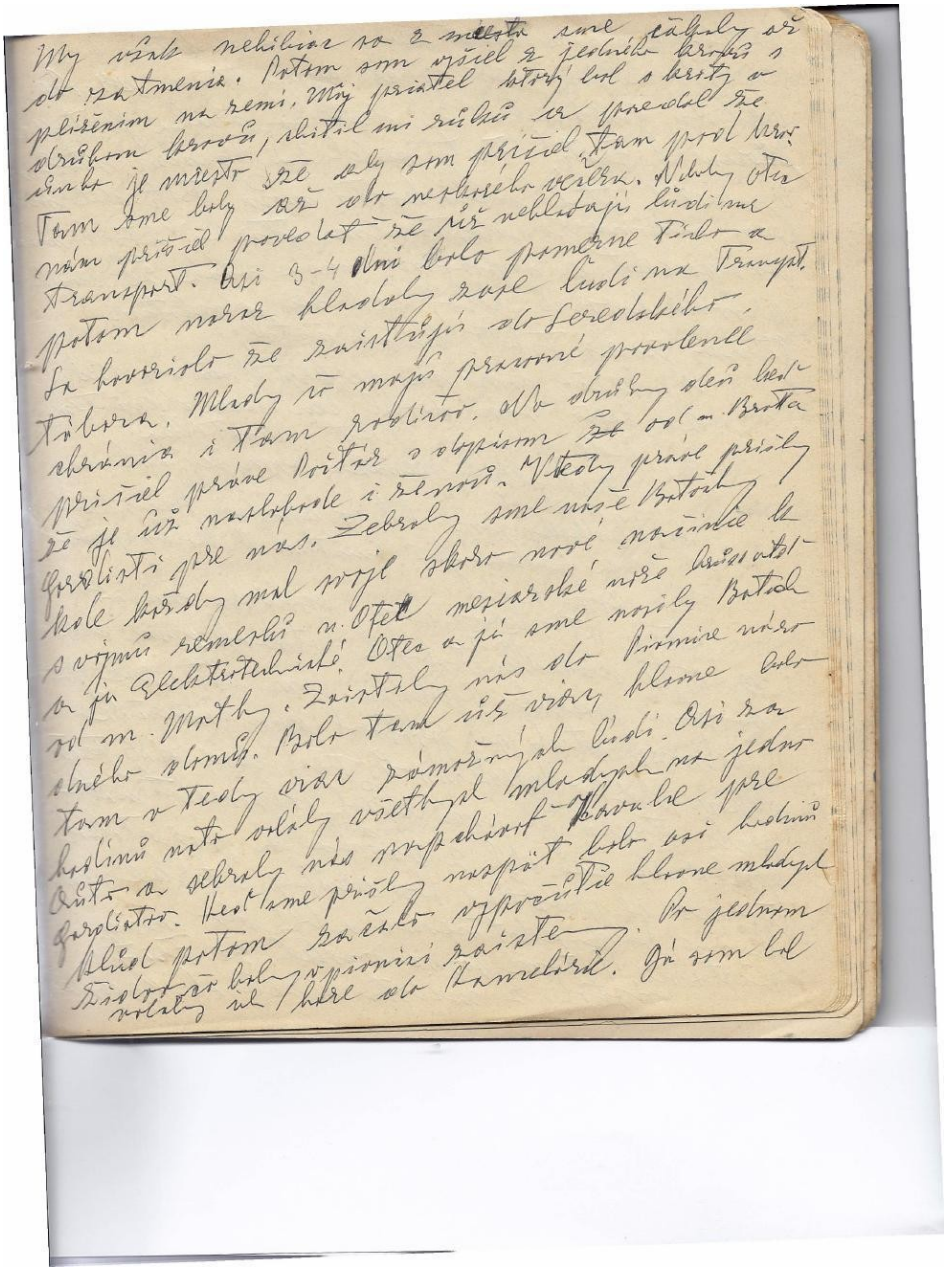

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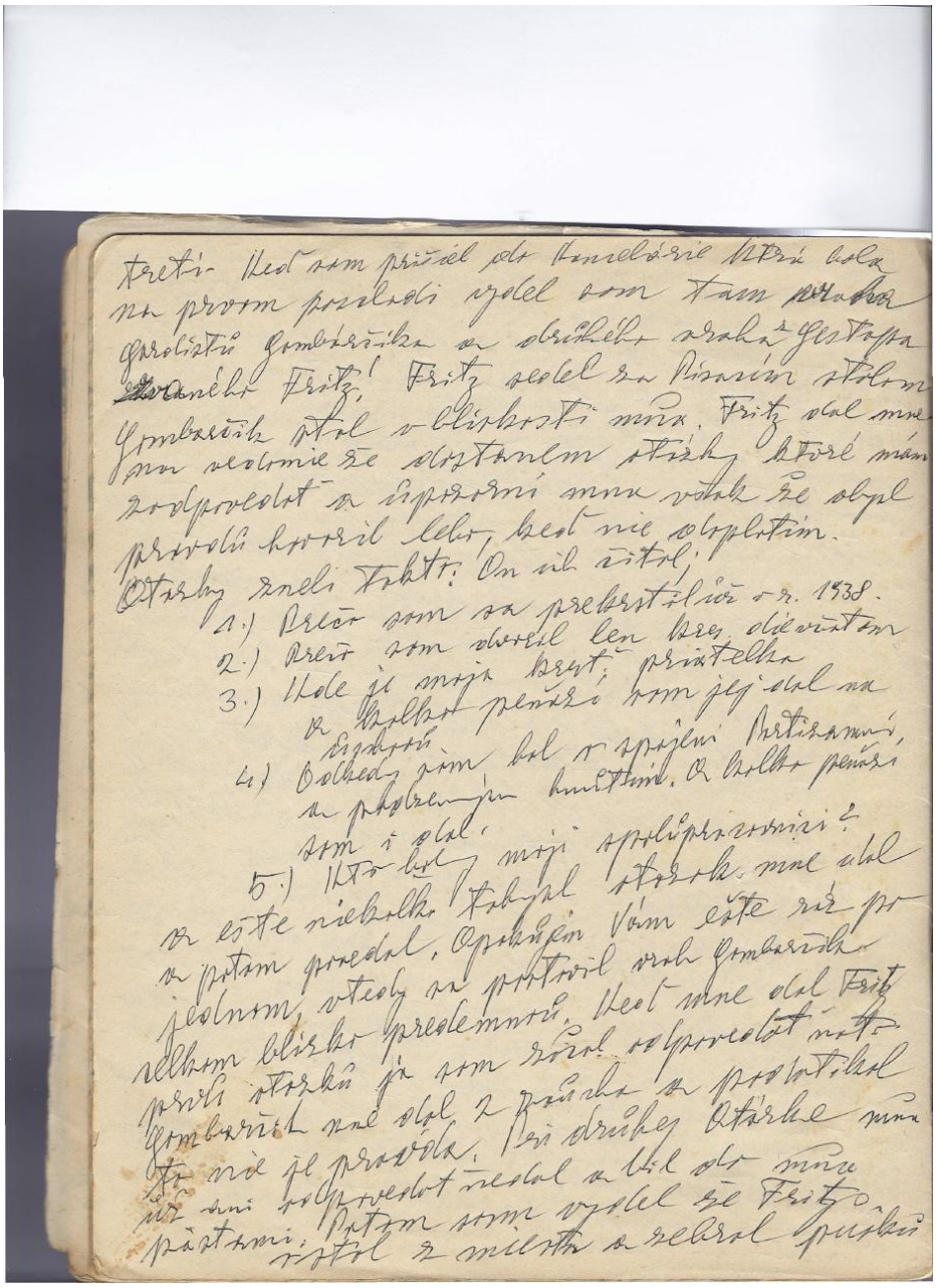

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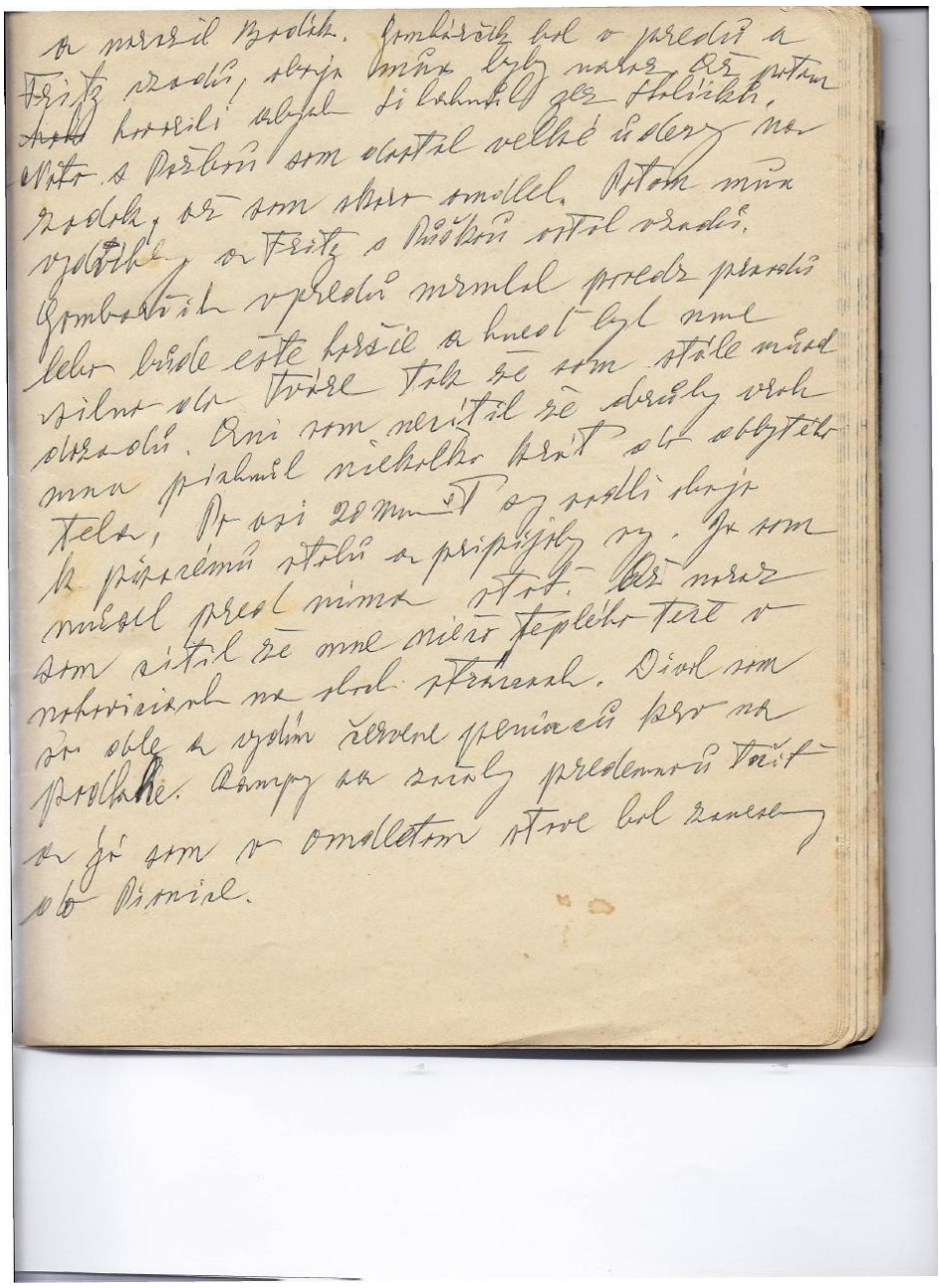

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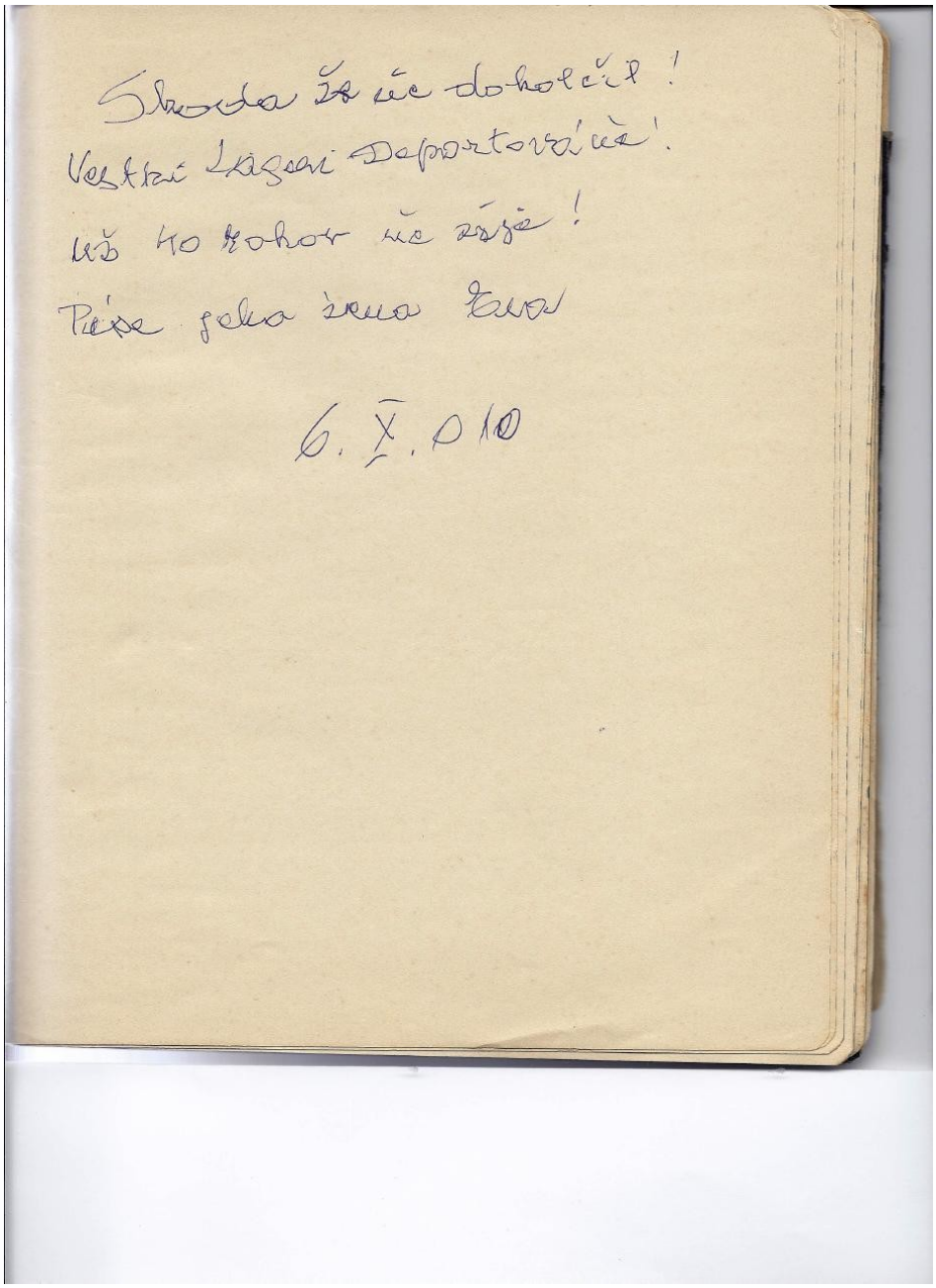

The final page, in Eva Löffler's hand.

Appendix B · The People of the Memoir

Maximilian “Mishko” Moshe Löffler — The author. Born in Nitra; hotel student, courier and forger for the anti-Nazi underground; survivor of the Vienna prison and of the camps; later emigrated to Israel. Died 29 May 1970.

Friedrich (Bedřich) Löffler — Mishko’s father; owner of the family hotel in Nitra. Came to Vienna to secure his son’s release in 1938. Did not survive the war.

Anna Löffler (née Körner) — Mishko’s mother. Did not survive the war.

Eva Chava Löffler (née Blitz) — Mishko’s wife; a survivor of Auschwitz. Translated the manuscript into Hebrew in the 1990s.

Júri Avigdor Löffler — Mishko and Eva’s elder son, born in Nitra in 1947.

Dan Tuvia Leffler (Löffler) — Mishko and Eva’s younger son, born in Israel; co-editor of this book.

Karol Löffler — Mishko’s younger brother; escaped to Palestine in 1939; the only sibling, with Mishko, to survive and reclaim the hotel after the war.

Dr. Ľudovít (Lajos / Louis) Löffler — Mishko’s older brother; arrested in Hungary and held at Sárvár; saved by forged documents.

Magda Löffler — Ľudovít’s wife; held at Kistarcsa; saved by forged documents. Later safeguarded the original notebook.

Hilda Novák (née Körner) — Mishko’s relative and head of the K.S. Viedeň underground cell in Vienna; escaped to Haifa aboard the Af-Al-Pi-Chen.

Karl Novák; Mila Weiss — Cousins who reached Palestine before the war.

Laci and Arthur — Cousins — a doctor and a pianist — who escaped with Karol in 1939.

Andor Brody — Mishko’s trusted friend; helped forge the thirty certificates in a single night; hid with him in the trench in 1944.

F. Devinský — Director of the Slovak National Theatre, Bratislava; gave Mishko work and a permit, and twice intervened to save him.

Relský; Rindstel — Theatre colleagues — a ballet master and a sympathiser — in whose offices Mishko secretly listened to foreign broadcasts.

Wagner — The Vienna police chief-superintendent who arrested Mishko in 1938 — and was himself later imprisoned.

Gombár; Gombárčik; Fritz — Hlinka Guard and Gestapo men who confronted and, in 1944, tortured Mishko.

Mrs. Šillerová — The Nitra neighbour whose warning, and whose garden trench, saved Mishko and Andor in 1944.

Ján Šmigovský — Slovak commander who refused to admit the Germans to the Nitra barracks.

Appendix C · The Places of the Memoir

Nitra — Mishko’s home town in western Slovakia; site of the family hotel and, in 1944, of the Národný Dom detention centre.

Grenoble — In the French Alps; Mishko studied hotel management at the Hôtel Lesdiguières.

Vienna — Centre of the K.S. Viedeň underground; site of his 1938 arrest and of the Rossauer Lände prison.

Marchegg — The Austrian–Slovak border crossing where Mishko was arrested in 1938.

Bratislava / Petržalka — The Slovak capital and its Danube suburb; the National Theatre and the river crossings.

Trnava — Where Mishko was jailed while smuggling money, and freed through Devinský.

Sereď, Nováky, Vyhne — The three labour camps of the Slovak State; Sereď became the main deportation point after 1944.

Veľké Uherce — The forest village where Mishko rested after his release from Vienna.

Veľká Luka / Sliač — The airfield where he served as an aircraft electrical technician.

Sárvár; Kistarcsa — Hungarian camps where his brother and sister-in-law were held.

Auschwitz, Gleiwitz, Blechhammer, Gross-Rosen, Buchenwald — The chain of German camps through which he passed in 1944–45.

Haifa — The port where the family began their new life in 1949.

Appendix D · Timeline

The events of Mishko's life set against the wider history of the war.

12 March 1938 — Germany annexes Austria. Mass arrests in Vienna.

1938 — Mishko, working for K.S. Viedeň, is arrested at Marchegg and held nine weeks in the Rossauer Lände prison.

Sept 1938 — The Munich Agreement cedes the Sudetenland to Germany.

Oct–Dec 1938 — Mishko organises Danube crossings and escapes toward Poland and the French Foreign Legion; called up to the Slovak Air Force.

15 March 1939 — Germany occupies the Czech lands; the Slovak State is proclaimed under Tiso.

1939 — Karol and cousins reach Palestine on one of the last ships out of Europe. War begins in September.

Sept 1941 — The Slovak "Jewish Code" is enacted.

1942 — About 58,000 Slovak Jews are deported. Mishko survives with a forged baptism certificate; secures theatre work permits through Devinský.

1943–44 — Underground broadcasts and document forgery; rescue of his brother's family in Hungary; the thirty certificates forged in a night.

29 Aug 1944 — The Slovak National Uprising begins; Germany occupies Slovakia. Round-ups of Jews resume.

Late 1944 — Mishko hides in the garden trench; is later seized and tortured at the Národný Dom in Nitra, then deported. The manuscript ends.

Late 1944–Jan 1945 — Gleiwitz, Blechhammer, Gross-Rosen, Buchenwald; a death march in January 1945.

Feb 1945 — Liberated from Buchenwald; returns to Nitra. His parents do not survive.

1945–47 — With Karol, briefly reclaims the family hotel. Marries Eva, a survivor of Auschwitz. Son Júri born, 1947.

1948 — Communist nationalisation strips the family of the hotel.

6 June 1949 — The family arrives in Haifa aboard the Galilah.

Late 1960s — In failing health, Mishko writes the "Zážitky" notebook and donates his wartime artefacts to the Ghetto Fighters' House Museum.

29 May 1970 — Maximilian "Mishko" Löffler dies, aged 59.

1990s — Eva translates the notebook into Hebrew.

2014 — English translation; the original is entrusted to Yad Vashem; the family is invited to the Rossauer Lände prison in Vienna.

Appendix E · Sources and Further Reading

The narrative of this book rests entirely on Maximilian Löffler's own testimony, as preserved in his handwritten notebook (original at Yad Vashem, Jerusalem) and translated into English in 2014. The historical panels and timeline draw on the established record of the period. Readers who wish to learn more may consult the following institutions and standard works.

Yad Vashem — The World Holocaust Remembrance Center, Jerusalem (yadvashem.org): archives, the central database of Holocaust victims' names, and extensive material on the Holocaust in Slovakia.

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington (ushmm.org) and its Holocaust Encyclopedia: entries on Slovakia, the Anschluss, Auschwitz, Gross-Rosen, Buchenwald and the death marches.

The Ghetto Fighters' House Museum (Lohamei HaGeta'ot), Israel: recipient of Maximilian Löffler's donated wartime artefacts.

The Austrian Holocaust Victims' Information and Support Center, Vienna: on the Rossauer Lände prison and Viennese persecution after the Anschluss.

On the Holocaust in Slovakia, the standard histories of the Tiso regime, the Jewish Code, the 1942 deportations and the 1944 German occupation.

For comparison and context among survivor memoirs: Elie Wiesel, Night; Primo Levi, If This Is a Man; Viktor Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning.

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. . .

This is my testimony – Everything I have written is true!

— Maximilian Moshe (Mishko) Löffler